



WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

SECTION 202

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Sheep Ridge WSA

Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA

Ventana Contiguous WSA

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1987



U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR



BUREAU OF LAND
MANAGEMENT
CALIFORNIA



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CALIFORNIA STATE OFFICE
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825

NOV 05 1987

Dear Reader

Enclosed is the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, and Ventana Contiguous Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in our Bakersfield District. The EIS analyzes the impact of adding 11,349 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System. One Partial Wilderness and three No Wilderness Alternatives are also considered. A draft EIS (Wilderness Recommendations for Central California Study Areas) that included these WSAs was distributed in May 1982 for a 90-day public review period and a hearing was held on June 22, 1982.

All recommendations contained herein are preliminary and subject to change during administrative review. The statement was prepared pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and responds to the mandates of Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to consider through the planning process areas that may be suitable for wilderness designation.

For further information, please contact Bob Rheiner, District Manager, Bakersfield District, Federal Building, Room 302, 800 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield, California 93301.

Sincerely,

Ed Hastey

Ed Hastey
State Director

Attachment
As stated

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
SECTION 202 WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS
ANALYZED IN THE 1982 DRAFT EIS FOR THE
CENTRAL CALIFORNIA STUDY AREAS

CA-010-022	SHEEP RIDGE WSA	4,905 Acres
CA-010-023	MILK RANCH/CASE MOUNTAIN WSA	5,742 Acres
CA-040-308	VENTANA CONTIGUOUS WSA	702 Acres

Prepared By

Bureau of Land Management
Bakersfield District Office, California

Ed Hartley
State Director, California

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON THE
WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE CENTRAL CALIFORNIA SECTION 202
WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Draft () Final (X) Environmental Impact Statement

1. Type of Action: Administrative (X) Legislative ()

2. Abstract:

The Bureau of Land Management, Caliente and Hollister Resource Areas, Bakersfield District, California, has analyzed the impacts and resource tradeoffs of proposals to not designate the Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, Ventana Contiguous Wilderness Study Areas as wilderness. This environmental impact statement also analyzes the impacts and tradeoffs of several alternatives including wilderness and partial wilderness. Wilderness characteristics and special features are examined.

3. For Further Information Contact:

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to document the environmental impacts of proposed actions and alternatives for three Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the Bakersfield District that are being considered for inclusion within the National Wilderness Preservation System. These are the Sheep Ridge WSA (CA-010-022), the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA (CA-010-023) and the Ventana Contiguous WSA (CA-040-308). The Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs are located in Tulare County. The Ventana Contiguous WSA is located in Monterey County. This EIS assesses the environmental consequences of managing these WSAs as wilderness and No Wilderness. A partial wilderness alternative was also analyzed for the Sheep Ridge WSA.

The Proposed Action for the Sheep Ridge WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 4,905 acres would be designated wilderness, but would be managed for multiple use. Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 4,905 acres as wilderness and a Partial Wilderness Alternative which would designate 4,705 acres as wilderness and keep 200 acres in multiple use. Issues analyzed for this WSA were the impacts on wilderness values, recreational use, and livestock grazing operations.

The Proposed Action for the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 5,742 acres would be designated wilderness, but would be managed for multiple use. One alternative as also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 5,742 acres as wilderness. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values and timber resources.

The Proposed Action for the Ventana Contiguous WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 702 acres would be designated wilderness, but would be managed for multiple use. One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 702 acres as wilderness. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values and ORV access.

Summaries of the impacts for the Proposed Action and Alternatives for the three WSAs are outlined on pages 2A-11, 2A-10, and 2A-9.

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL LOCATION

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addresses three Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) located in the Caliente and Hollister Resource Areas of the Bakersfield (California) District of the Bureau of Land Management (Map 1). These Wilderness Study Areas are studied under the provisions of Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). The BLM's Wilderness Inventory Handbook defines these areas as:

Roadless areas of less than 5,000 acres of contiguous public lands where any one of the following apply:

- 1) They are contiguous with lands managed by another agency which have been formally determined to have wilderness or potential wilderness values, or
- 2) The public has indicated strong support for study of a particular area of less than 5,000 acres and it is demonstrated that it is clearly and obviously of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and of a size suitable for wilderness management, or
- 3) They are contiguous with an area of less than 5,000 acres of other Federal lands administered by an agency with authority to study and preserve wilderness lands, and the combined total is 5,000 acres or more.

The WSAs in this EIS are adjacent to areas managed by National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

The WSAs studied in this EIS include:

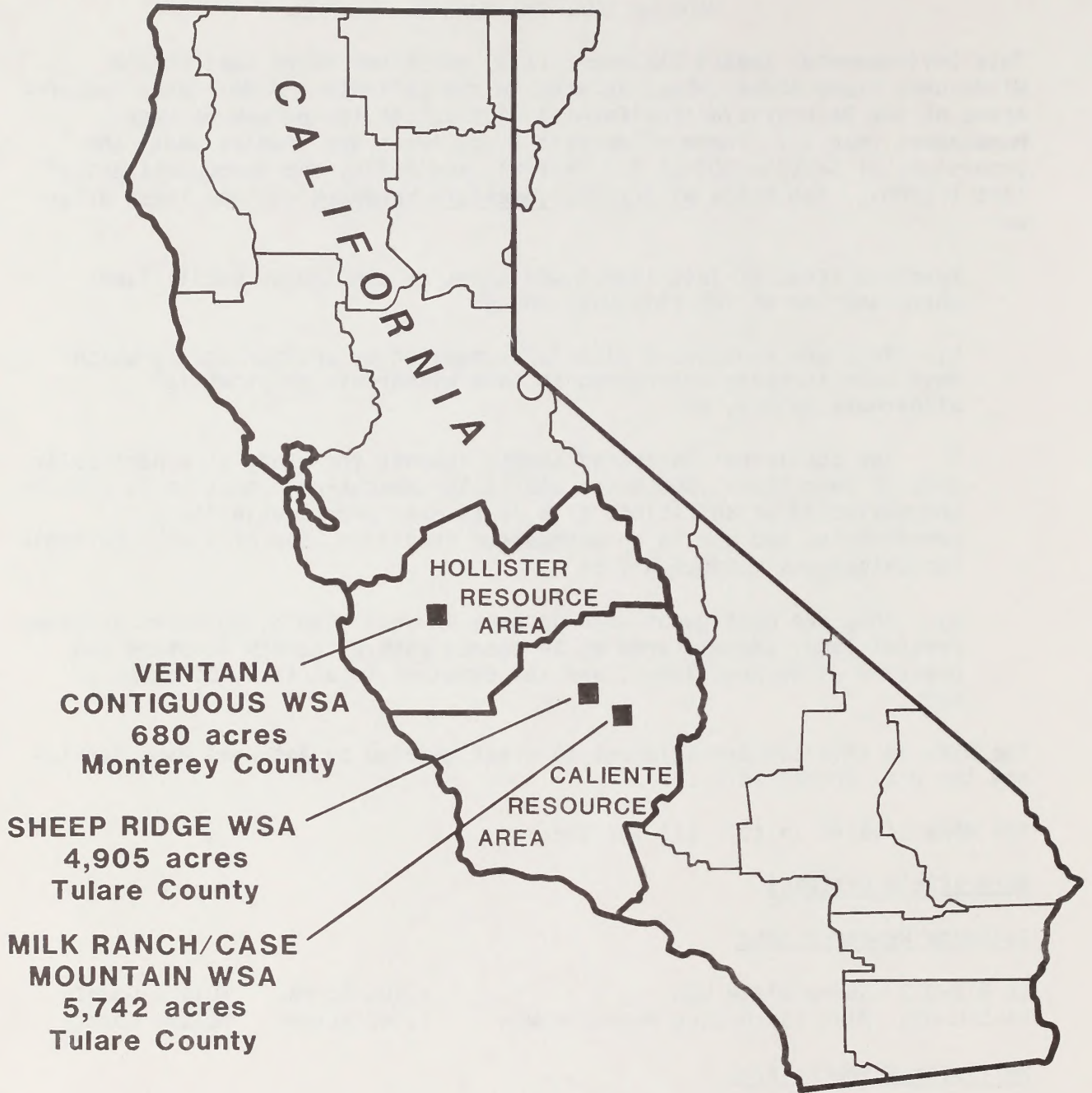
Bakersfield District

Caliente Resource Area

CA-010-022	Sheep Ridge WSA	4,905 Acres	Tulare County
CA-010-023	Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA	5,742 Acres	Tulare County

Hollister Resource Area

CA-040-308	Ventana Contiguous WSA	680 Acres	Monterey County
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MAP 1

LOCATION OF THE WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Map 1. Location of the WSAs analyzed in this EIS.

FORMAT OF THE EIS

This Section 202 Wilderness Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is comprised of three primary sections (Introduction, Description and Analysis of Individual WSAs, and Consultation and Coordination). The Introduction provides an overview of the study process as it relates to all the three Section 202 WSAs being studied. Following the Introduction, the EIS includes detailed discussions of the issues; the proposed action and alternative(s); affected environment; and environmental consequences for each individual WSA. The final primary section relates to all the WSAs and deals with the consultation and coordination efforts with other Federal, State and local agencies as well as comments presented by the public.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The purpose of the Proposed Actions for the WSAs in this study is to set forth a pattern of management actions for each of the three WSAs.

In 1978, BLM began a wilderness inventory to identify lands having wilderness characteristics. Lands found to have these characteristics, as defined by the Congress in the Wilderness Act, were designated as Wilderness Study Areas to undergo further review as required by Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. By 1980 the BLM had completed the inventory of 174 million acres in the 11 western States. During the process, lands found to be primarily natural, but dependent for wilderness character upon adjacent federally managed lands, were designated as WSAs under the discretionary wilderness study authority of Section 202 of FLPMA. In December 1982, former Secretary Watt dropped from study those WSAs designated under Section 202. The Sierra Club filed suit on that decision and the court ruled that, although the Secretary could drop these WSAs, the justification and rationale used for dropping the areas was not legal. As a result of that ruling, Secretary Hodel decided that the WSAs involved in litigation would be put back into the study process.

THE SECTION 202 WILDERNESS REVIEW PROCESS AND ITS INTEGRATION WITH PLANNING

To accomplish the mandate of Section 603 of FLPMA, the BLM developed a wilderness review process containing three phases: inventory, study, and reporting. This process also applies to the Section 202 WSAs which are being studied in accordance with the general land use planning provisions of Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and policies that provide for wilderness consideration of areas of less than 5,000 acres if they are adjacent to lands with wilderness potential administered by other Federal agencies.

Introduction

The inventory phase of this process, initiated in 1978, involved examining the public lands to determine and locate the existence of areas containing wilderness characteristics that met the criteria established in the Wilderness Act. Areas clearly lacking wilderness characteristics were sorted out from lands that might have those characteristics. This intensive inventory was then followed by a 90-day public review period, after which final WSAs were identified.

This inventory process and a general description of all of California's WSAs are given in Wilderness: Final Intensive Inventory, Public Lands Administered by BLM California Outside the California Desert Conservation Area (1979). A copy of this publication is available at any BLM office.

The second step in the review process was to integrate wilderness evaluation into the BLM Planning System (43 CFR 1600), which, in this case, involve amendments to existing Resource Management Plans (RMPs). The BLM's wilderness study criteria and quality standards containing the BLM's Wilderness Study Policy: Policies, Criteria and Guidelines for Conducting Wilderness Studies on Public Lands (47 FR 5098-5122) were applied to each WSA.

In addition to the above referenced criteria and standards, issues for discussion were identified through public comment and internal scoping; conflicts were analyzed, and alternatives were developed. See the individual sections for each of the section 202 WSAs for a discussion of the selection of the Proposed Actions and development as well as issues and alternatives considered but not found to be significant enough for detailed analysis. These alternatives are the basis for analysis of environmental consequences and resource tradeoffs.

This FEIS addresses three WSAs that were included in the 1982 draft EIS for the Central California Study Areas but dropped in the subsequent FEIS (see page 1-6). For any Section 202 WSAs that he does not recommend for wilderness designation (all three WSAs in this FEIS), the State Director has the authority under FLPMA to release those public lands from wilderness study and return them to multiple-use management in accordance with existing land use plans. A Record of Decision will be prepared for these WSAs for State Director's approval. Multiple-use management may begin 30 days after the State Director files the FEIS with the Environmental Protection Agency.

SCOPING

The Council on Environmental Quality Regulations Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Part 1501.7) and the BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-1) require an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action. Scoping determines in depth the scope and the significant issues to be analyzed in the EIS and identifies and eliminates from detailed study insignificant issues or issues addressed in earlier environmental reviews. Scoping thus reduces the length of the EIS and emphasizes the real alternatives and impacts of importance to be discussed.

During this process, the scope and importance of issues related to the proposed action and alternatives were identified. Information obtained during the scoping process was one of the sources used to determine which impact topics would be addressed in detail in this EIS. Additional purposes of the scoping process are to inform affected Federal, State, and local agencies and other interested parties about the proposed project, and to identify existing environmental reports and information related to the impact assessment.

The scoping process involved discussions with the public and resource specialists and managers of BLM and other relevant agencies. Written comments were received and compiled as a result of Federal Register announcements, news releases, mailings, and articles about the proposal. Comments were also solicited during public meetings. In addition, the initial scoping effort has been followed by an effort to continue agency and public involvement throughout the development of this EIS. This section outlines the steps taken by BLM for the scoping and public involvement process for the EIS.

SCOPING PROCESS

On February 19, 1982, the Bureau published a Federal Register notice describing its intent to conduct a wilderness study for central California. The notice identified the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to be analyzed the process to be used, and how the public could become involved. A second Federal Register notice was published on March 26, 1982, notifying the public of the availability of the planning criteria to be used in amending the land use plans in which these WSAs were founded. On April 15, a wilderness study announcement and mailing list renewal notice were sent to over 900 people on the Bakersfield District wilderness mailing list. The announcement described the current studies of Bakersfield District WSAs, including this study as well as the USFS/BLM joint wilderness studies presently being conducted by the Forest Service. A media release with similar information concerning this study effort was disseminated on April 26. During preparation of the draft EIS, Area Managers briefed members of County Board of Supervisors and provided on-the-ground talks with various interest groups.

On May 13, 1982, a Federal Register notice indicated that the draft EIS had been prepared and announced the time, date, and location of the public hearing. Distribution of the DEIS to the public and the State Clearinghouse occurred on May 19. A May 20 media release gave details on the public hearing and identified review locations for the draft EIS (District and Area Office and 10 libraries throughout the EIS area) and the final date for public comments. Another letter was sent to the wilderness mailing list summarizing the draft EIS and identifying DEIS review locations, the final date for comments, and contacts for further information.

The June 4, 1982, Federal Register carried a Notice of Availability of the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Area Draft EIS in which the Proposed Action and alternatives were summarized and the closing date of the public comment period.

The public hearing was held on June 22, 1982, in a split afternoon/evening session at the State Building in Fresno, California. On July 2, a separate media release was issued to solicit further involvement in the Hollister Area.

As a result of the issuance of new BLM Planning Regulations, published in the Federal Register on May 5, 1983, the public comment period on the draft EIS was extended an additional 30 days to comply with the 90-day review requirement. The extension notice, published in the Federal Register on August 9, 1983, identified September 12, 1983, as the closing date. A letter, dated August 19, 1983, was sent to the wilderness mailing list advertising the review period extension and summarizing the modifications to be made in the final EIS regarding the removal of areas less than 5,000 acres of contiguous Public Lands. That final EIS was distributed to the public on February 13, 1987. This document is the final EIS for the areas that were removed. Also see page 1-4.

A further discussion of the alternatives analyzed in this document is contained in the individual sections of this document that follow for each WSA.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

During the scoping process environmental issues relating to whether a WSA is to be managed as wilderness or managed for multiple resource values were identified by the BLM, the public, and by other Federal, State and local agencies. After the issues were identified for each WSA, they were assessed to determine if they would be selected for detailed analysis in the EIS. Generally, the issues focused on the impact on wilderness values as a result of designation or non-designation of the area as wilderness. Additional concerns assessed in the EIS related to the impact on resources such as water quality, threatened and endangered species, fisheries, wildlife and cultural resources. Issues related to activities such as recreational ORV use, mineral/energy development, and timber harvest were also assessed for analysis in the EIS.

A further discussion of specific issues analyzed in detail in this EIS and the issues dismissed from further analysis is contained in the individual sections of this document that follow for each WSA.

SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

Development of the Proposed Action is guided by requirements of the Bureau's Planning Regulations, 43 CFR Part 1600. The BLM's Wilderness Study Policy

Introduction

(published February 3, 1982, in the Federal Register) supplements the planning regulations by providing specific factors to be considered during the planning sequence in developing suitability recommendations.

In this document, the No Action Alternative, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and the No Wilderness Alternative are equivalent. Both advocate continuation of management as outlined in the existing MFPs and RMPs.

The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Partial Wilderness Alternatives can make suitable or unsuitable recommendations ranging between the All Wilderness and No Action Alternatives. A Partial Wilderness Alternative can recommend as suitable for wilderness designation something less than the entire acreage of one WSA.

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SHEEP RIDGE WSA
(CA-010-022)

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The WSA is approximately 4,905 acres and is located about 5 miles north of Three Rivers WSA and about 24 miles northeast of Visalia in Tulare County. It is bounded to the northeast by Sequoia National Park lands currently in non wilderness status. Portions of the west and southwest edges border a maintained road along Sheep Creek. A portion of the eastern boundary abuts the maintained road along the North Fork of the Kaweah River. The remaining boundaries are formed by non-public land. See Map 2.

The landscape of this WSA is dominated by a rugged, steep ridge located between Sheep Creek and the North Fork of the Kaweah River. Dense chaparral and scattered oaks and grasses constitute the majority of the vegetation. Some small canyons dissect the flanks of the ridge and a small creek traverses the unit from west to east, separating Sheep Ridge from Burnt Point Mountain.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

For the Sheep Ridge WSA, the following issues were identified during the scoping process and selected for analysis in the EIS.

- Impacts on Wilderness Values

Wilderness designation or nondesignation of the WSA could have beneficial or adverse impacts on its wilderness values.

- Impacts on Recreational Use

Approximately 600 visitor days per year are concentrated at Cherry Falls on the North Fork of the Kaweah River within the WSA. Wilderness designation would close the 1/4 mile vehicle route that heads west from the North Fork Road to a parking area above Cherry Falls. All visitors to Cherry Falls would then have to park along the North Fork Road which is very narrow and required for CDF fire equipment passage to private and federal lands further north. Serious congestion problems have occurred in the past when the 1/4 mile vehicle route has been temporarily closed due to muddy conditions. The impact of wilderness designation (which would permanently close this access route) on the recreational opportunities at Cherry Falls is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

- Impacts on Livestock Grazing Operations

Approximately 680 acres of the North Fork River Allotment is proposed for prescribed burning to increase livestock forage production by approximately 68 AUMs. Should the area be designated wilderness, prescribed burns would be eliminated and livestock forage would not be increased. The significance of this impact on livestock grazing operations is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Additional issues were assessed to determine their significance for analysis in the EIS. However, upon further consideration they were not selected for detailed analysis. A brief discussion of each issue and the reason for dismissing it from analysis in the EIS follows.

- Impacts on Fire Suppression Activities

Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management.

- Impacts on Mineral Resource Development

An issue dealing with the development of the area's mineral resources was considered but dropped from further analysis. Tungsten occurrences are known to be associated with the granitic/metamorphic contacts found in the area of the WSA. Development potential for tungsten is considered low, since deposits elsewhere in the Sierra Nevada range tend to be small and discontinuous. No reports of gold or other mineralization within the WSA are known. The geologic environment of the WSA does not favor the formation of deposits of leasable minerals such as oil, gas and evaporates. No mining claims occur within the WSA. The lack of mineral development potential and mining claim activity are the reasons why this issue was dropped.

- Impacts on Wildlife Habitat Improvement Projects

An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of wildlife habitat improvement projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on maintenance/monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.

SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

Development of the Proposed Action is guided by requirements of the Bureau's Planning Regulations, 43 CFR Part 1600. The BLM's Wilderness Study Policy (published February 3, 1982, in the Federal Register) supplements the planning regulations by providing specific factors to be considered during the planning sequence in developing suitability recommendations.

In this document, the No Action Alternative, as required by the National Environmental Protection Act, and the No Wilderness Alternative are equivalent. Both advocate continuation of management as outlined in the existing RMP and recommendation of the WSAs as nonsuitable for wilderness.

The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Partial Wilderness Alternatives can make suitable or unsuitable recommendations ranging between the All Wilderness and No Action Alternatives. A Partial Wilderness Alternative can recommend as suitable for wilderness designation something less than the entire acreage of one WSA.

The following Proposed Action and Alternatives for the Sheep Ridge WSA were selected for analysis in this EIS.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

0 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
4,905 Acres Nonwilderness

The Proposed Action for the Sheep Ridge WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 4,905 acres would be designated wilderness. The entire area would continue to be managed for multiple-use as described on page 2A-7 in this document and the South Sierra Foothills MPF.

The rationale for this proposal includes: (1) The wilderness values of the area are not considered outstanding, (2) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources and (3) management of the area as wilderness would be difficult because of the narrowness of the WSA and the likelihood of intrusions from adjacent private lands.

This proposal has been discussed informally with local NPS personnel, and they concur that it is compatible with current Park management plans.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

4,905 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
0 Acres Nonwilderness

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 4,905 acres would be designated wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness.

PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

4,705 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
200 Acres Nonwilderness

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, 4,705 acres would be designated wilderness; 200 acres would not be designated, but managed for multiple use under the South Sierra Foothills MPF.

Sheep Ridge

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

No additional alternatives were developed for the 4,905 acre Sheep Ridge WSA. Due to the WSAs small size and compact shape, further wilderness alternatives were not identified that would improve wilderness values by segregating areas with significant wilderness values.

THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Since the pattern of future actions within the WSA cannot be predicted with certainty, we have made projections of management actions to allow the analysis of impacts under the Proposed Action and alternative. These projections are the basis of the impacts identified in this EIS. They represent reasonably feasible patterns of activities which could occur under the Proposed Action and alternative analyzed assuming there is adequate funding. This document does not constitute a management plan. BLM is not necessarily committed to the management actions listed and is not restricted from implementing additional actions which are not listed.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

None of the 4,905 acres of public land in the Sheep Ridge WSA are recommended for wilderness designation (Map 2). Under this proposal, the lands will be managed in accordance with the exiting South Sierra Foothills MFP (1983). Recreational ORV use will remain "limited" to existing routes of travel. Lands will remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mining laws, though the mineral potential is low. Full fire suppression using mechanized equipment will be practiced and existing levels of livestock use will be maintained.

RECREATION USE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The one vehicle route, a 1/4 mile long access way connecting the North Fork Road and a parking area above Cherry Falls, will remain open. No other ORV use areas exist within the WSA and none are planned. An estimated 600 visitor days per year will continue to occur at Cherry Falls. Other non-motorized opportunities are very limited due to a lack of legal access across private lands and steep, rocky terrain within the WSA.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Approximately 4,505 acres of the Sheep Ridge WSA will continue to be used for livestock grazing. Livestock use will continue to be maintained at the existing level of 425 AUMs for cattle on three grazing allotments. The North Fork River Allotment (Map 2) would be placed under an allotment management plan, and would be managed for a maximum annual forage utilization of 600 lb/ac. A 1/2 mile drift fence rear advance will continue to be maintained using motor vehicle access.

Four new range improvement projects would be implemented. A 680 acre prescribed burn would be conducted in the middle of the WSA, resulting in an expected increase of 68 AUMs of livestock forage. The burn would be on the North Fork River and Burnt Point Allotments. The area would be reburned every 10 years.

Three new spring developments would be constructed on Sheep Ridge to improve livestock distribution on the North Fork River Allotment. The springs would be constructed and maintained by horseback, since no vehicle routes exist near the proposed sites.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Mechanized equipment for suppression and presuppression activities under contract to the California Department of Forestry would continue to be utilized. There are currently no maintained firebreaks within the WSA and no construction or maintenance of firebreaks is planned.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

There are no specific actions planned for wildlife habitat management in the Sheep Ridge WSA.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

There are no specific actions planned for vegetation management in the WSA. However, see Grazing Management Actions, below.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The fences around the two historic structures at the Advance Colony site will be maintained to protect historical values. No other cultural resource management actions are planned other than review of other project proposals that might impact cultural or historical resources.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative all 4,905 acres would be open to mineral exploration and development under the mining and mineral leasing laws. No mining claims currently exist in the WSA. No significant exploration or development is anticipated because of the steep terrain, lack of legal access opportunities and low mineral potentials involved.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 4,905 acres of public land in the Sheep Ridge WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

RECREATIONAL USE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The vehicle route between the North Fork Road and the parking area above Cherry Falls would be closed. No new vehicle routes would be constructed in the WSA under this alternative.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The grazing management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would essentially be the same as those described under the Proposed Action. However, unlike the Proposed Action, no prescribed burns would be conducted.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Under this alternative, a fire management plan would be written for the WSA and would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crew would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when the terrain and soil conditions would permit such travel within damage to vegetative cover. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high-value property and only with the approval of the District Manager.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The wildlife management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The vegetation management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The grazing management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would essentially be the same as those described under the Proposed Action.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 4,905 acres would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. No mineral development currently exists or is anticipated.

PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, the areas around Cherry Falls and the CDF fuel break are recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation (200 acres). This allows for the development of a walk-in campground at Cherry Falls to meet local recreation demand and prevent further resource damage. It eliminates from wilderness the fuel break that CDF uses chemicals and motorized equipment to maintain. The remainder of the area (4,705 acres) is recommended suitable for wilderness designation. See Map 3.

RECREATIONAL USE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

No ORV use is known to occur in the WSA outside of the Cherry Falls area (which is drawn out of this alternative). Non-motorized opportunities are very limited due to a lack of legal access across private lands and steep rocky terrain within the WSA.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as All Wilderness Alternative, except there would be fewer allotment acres within wilderness.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as All Wilderness Alternative.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as Proposed Action.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as Proposed Action.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as the Proposed Action.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Same as the All Wilderness Alternative.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The major impacts of the alternatives are summarized in Table 1. The most important impacts involve a reduction in wilderness values from vehicle access at Cherry Falls (Proposed Action and Partial Wilderness Alternative) and prescribed burning (Proposed Action).

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND THE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE SHEEP RIDGE WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would generally be preserved. However, there would be continuing moderate adverse impacts from vehicular traffic and parking near Cherry Falls (about 1 percent of the WSA). Prescribed burning would affect up to one-fifth of the WSA, but the impact would be temporary. Impacts to wilderness values from other management actions would be minor or negligible.	Wilderness values would be well preserved. They would be enhanced by the removal of vehicle access at Cherry Falls and would avoid the impacts of prescribed burning.	Impacts on wilderness values would be the same as under the All Wilderness Alternative, except that there would be continuing moderate adverse impacts from vehicular traffic and parking near Cherry Falls (about 1 percent of the WSA).
Impacts on Recreational Use	Recreational use would continue at about 600 visitor days per year mostly at Cherry Falls.	Recreational use would remain at about 600 visitor days per year, mostly at Cherry Falls. There would be parking problems on the North Fork Road.	Recreational use impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.
Impacts on Livestock Grazing Operations	Livestock forage within the WSA would be increased 68 ARMs (or about 15 percent) to 493 AUMs and its availability to livestock would be improved.	Livestock forage within the WSA would remain at 425 AUMs, but its availability to livestock would be improved.	Impacts on livestock grazing would be the same as for the All Wilderness Alternative.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

WILDERNESS VALUES

NATURALNESS

The area generally retains its primeval character and influence. The imprint of man's work, which includes a few primitive vehicle routes, and is substantially unnoticeable due to terrain and vegetative screening and the deteriorated nature of the vehicle routes.

The CDF maintained fuel break in the extreme northern corner of the WSA. The access road and recreation use at Cherry Falls impact naturalness in that specific area (perhaps 50 acres in Section 24), but the current impact is quite localized.

SOLITUDE

The areas topographic variation and rugged terrain as well as vegetative variety combine to create areas of seclusion, particularly along the northeastern edge of the WSA which is adjacent to Sequoia National Park.

PRIMITIVE OR UNCONFINED RECREATION

The unit provides opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Rugged terrain and vegetative variety combine to create areas of seclusion, as well as a challenging environment for primitive types of recreation. When considered as one roadless unit with the adjacent National Park lands opportunities for both solitude and a primitive and unconfined type of recreation become outstanding. In addition, those portions of the North Fork of the Kaweah River that are located within the unit provide excellent opportunities for water-related activities.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The only special feature of the WSA is the North Fork of the Keweah River and the opportunities it provides for fishing, swimming, and related activities.

RECREATION

Of the estimated 650 visitor days for the WSA, about 600 are concentrated at Cherry Falls from May through mid-summer when water levels and visitor use drop drastically. Swimming, fishing and picnicking are the most popular activities at Cherry Falls. Other recreational uses of the WSA include limited hunting and hiking. ORV use is almost nonexistent because of steep terrain and limited public access.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Approximately 4,400 acres within the WSA are leased for grazing comprising all or part of three allotments (Map 2). Season of use varies from year long to March through June. About 425 AUMs (all cattle) are applicable to

Sheep Ridge

the WSA. The only existing range project within the WSA is a 1/2-mile fence along the WSA boundary near Advance (Map 2). It is anticipated that an allotment management plan (AMP) will be developed for the North Fork River Allotment. Proposed range improvements within the WSA are listed on page 2A-7.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The 4,905 acre WSA consists of solidly blocked public lands.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The WSA is situated in the territory which was ethnographically and occupied by two Western Mono aboriginal groups. The principal cultural group, the Waksachi, occupied the Eshom Valley and areas south along the North Fork Kaweah River. The Patwisha marginally utilized the southern portion of the WSA. There are two prehistoric milling station sites formally recorded within the southeast portion of the WSA. Prehistoric site types frequently encountered in the Three Rivers region are food milling stations, temporary camps, and hunting and gathering loci. No current use of the WSA area by contemporary Native American is known.

The Three Rivers area was historically developed by settlers during the 1850's with subsequent population increase occurring in the 1870's when silver was discovered in the region. During the 1880's a socialist utopian colony, known as the Kaweah Colony, developed along the North Fork Kaweah River. In general, the colony envisioned an ideal cooperative industrial colony in which working members would control production and be awarded according to production results. The first undertaking of the colony was to construct a road to the timber claims on the western Sierra Nevada slopes, so that the pines and giant Sequoia trees could be exploited and sold for public use. The Advance site was the primary camp used by colony members while the road to the giant Sequoia forest grove was under construction. The remains of the historic structures of the Advance site are situated at the southern end of the WSA. A small segment of the historic road is marginally within the southeastern boundary of the WSA. No additional historical resources are known to occur within the study area.

Cultural record search data for the region, suggest that cultural sensitivity for the WSA to range between moderate to high. No National Register properties have been identified in the WSA, although the Advance site may potentially meet National Register criteria.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Most of the WSA has only fair scenic quality - consisting of dense chaparral and/or scattered oaks and grass. However, some of the areas along the river provide vista of good to excellent scenic quality. Most of the WSA is rated VRM Class IV while the river corridor is rates VRM Class II.

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VEGETATION

Dense chaparral covers the drier, south facing slopes, while the remaining slopes support scattered oaks and grasses. No endangered, threatened or sensitive plant species are known to occur within the study area.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife typical to the area include California mule deer, black bear, cottontail rabbit, brush rabbit, valley and mountain quail, mountain lion, bobcat, wild turkey and mourning dove. Potholes in the North Fork of the Kaweah River provide nesting habitat for mallards and wood ducks. These areas also provide nesting and feeding areas for migrating waterfowl. Major fishes in the Kaweah River include rainbow trout, small mouth bass, suckers, and sunfish. Beaver and muskrat have been taken on the Forks of the Kaweah River. Gray fox are widely dispersed throughout the area. Resident deer occur throughout the study area. The southeast portion of the study area is also used as winter range by the Kaweah River Deer Herd.

MINERAL RESOURCES

The Sheep Ridge WSA is underlain by granitic rocks of the Sierra Nevada Batholith, intrusive into older metasedimentary rocks. Metasediments include marble, quartzite, slate and schist. This geologic environment favors the occurrence of locatable minerals, particularly those typical of hydrothermal vein-type deposits (gold, silver) and contact metamorphic/replacement deposits (barite, tungsten). Tungsten occurrences are known to be associated with granitic/metamorphic contacts two miles west of the WSA.

Development potential for tungsten is considered low, since deposits elsewhere in the Sierra tend to be small and discontinuous. No reports of gold or other mineralization within or adjacent to the WSA are known. Development potential for gold is also considered to be low.

Salable minerals in the form of decorative stone, rip rap or sand and gravel are common applications of Sierran rock. Although these resources may be present in the WSA, they would have no value without a convenient and stable market. Since the WSA is remote and difficult to access, its development potential for salable minerals is considered to be low.

The geologic environment of the WSA does not favor the formation of deposits of leasable minerals such as oil, gas, and evaporates. These are restricted to younger, less deformed sedimentary environments.

No mining claims occur within the WSA as recorded in the BLM Mining Claim Index dated April 8, 1987.

Sheep Ridge

SOIL AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

SOILS

Soils in this WSA are predominately shallow (< 20" deep) over granitic bedrock, and many rock outcrops occur throughout the area. The SCS soil map for the area records the following predominant soil mapping units:

- Holland - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 50% slopes
- Sheephead - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 75% slopes
- Friant - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 75% slopes

Soil classifications are as follows:

- Holland - fine-loamy, mixed, mesic Ultic Haploxeralfs
- Sheephead - loamy, mixed, mesic, shallow Entic Ultic Haploxerolls
- Friant - loamy, mixed, thermic, Lithic Haploxerolls

The erosion hazard for these soils is high to very high under bare soil conditions because of the steep slopes, high rainfall (about 30"/year), and high detachability of these granitic soils.

WATERSHED

The area slopes to the east, generally, down to the North Fork Kaweah River. The general condition of the watershed is good because of the lack of disturbed soils.

Sheep Ridge

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section focuses directly on the issues identified through the scoping process. The environmental impacts of each alternative are described issue by issue. The environmental impacts of these alternatives on the area's other resources have also been analyzed and have been found to be insignificant.

Because of the general nature of this analysis and the lack of numerical and statistical information regarding the area's resources, impacts in this section are often expressed in relative terms. For the purpose of this analysis the meanings of these terms are as follows:

- Negligible or slight impact - the degree of anticipated environmental impact is considered less than minor.
- Minor impact - comparatively unimportant; in terms of the area's wildlife resources, a minor impact is one affecting a specific group of individuals of a population in a localized area for one generation or less; the integrity of the regional population is not likely to be affected.
- Moderate impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a change in the abundance of a resource or its distribution. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of a portion of the regional or local population would change over more than one generation, but would not affect the integrity of the regional population as a whole.
- Major impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a decline in the abundance of a resource or a change in distribution of a resource. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of the regional or local population of a species would decline beyond which natural recruitment would not likely return that population to its former level within several generations.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

The primary concern under the Proposed Action is the impact on wilderness values from recreational use at Cherry Falls and prescribed burning, both in the North Fork Block.

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

The Proposed Action for the Sheep Ridge WSA will not result in any of the 4,905 acres within the WSA being designated wilderness. None of the wilderness values will receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. The wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation will continue to be moderately adversely impacted by

Sheep Ridge

vehicular traffic, parked vehicles, and heavy recreational use on about 50 acres in the vicinity of the 1/4 mile access road and parking area near Cherry Falls. However, the remainder of the WSA (most of which lies west of the North Fork of the Kaweah River), would receive only minor impacts and the area as a whole would not be impaired.

Fire suppression would have a minor impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment were used, but the impact would be reduced by post-suppression reclamation (including machine seeding). Prescribed burnes on 680 acres every 10 years will have a short-term moderate impact on naturalness (charred and charged vegetation) affecting about 1,000 acres (burned area plus viewshed) for about two years or until vegetative succession provides substantial regrowth.

The maintenance of the fences around the historic structures at the Advance Colony would have negligible impact beyond that of the existing fences and, in any event, would be insignificant when the WSA is viewed as a whole.

No mining-related activity or development is anticipated; therefore, no impacts from mining are predicted.

Impacts from the three spring developments would be negligible and localized. The springs would be constructed so as to not be visibly obvious. Any negative visual impact would be partially counter-balanced minor positive impacts for wildlife.

Conclusion: Wilderness values would generally be preserved. However, there would be continuing moderate adverse impacts from vehicular traffic and parking near Cherry Falls (about one percent of the WSA). Prescribed burning would affect up to one-fifth of the WSA, but the impact would be temporary. Impacts to wilderness values from other management actions would be minor or negligible.

IMPACTS ON RECREATION USE

Recreational use (primarily swimming, fishing, and picnicing) would remain at about 600 visitor days per year since no management actions that would significantly impact recreation are anticipated. Recreational use would continue at Cherry Falls. The use of other areas of the WSA would remain limited due to a lack of legal access across private lands and steep rocky terrain within the WSA. Maintenance of the fences around the Advance Colony historic site will continue to protect the structures from vandalism; thereby preserving their scenic and historical values for visitor appreciation.

Conclusion: Recreational use would continue at about 600 visitor days per year mostly at Cherry Falls.

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IMPACTS ON LIVESTOCK GRAZING OPERATIONS

The AMP planned for the North Fork River Allotment including the three spring developments would improve forage utilization in the WSA and the projected prescribed burning would increase livestock forage about 15% or 68 AUMs to 493 AUMs. The remainder of the management actions would have no measurable impact on livestock grazing operations.

Conclusion: Livestock forage within the WSA would be increased 68 AUMs (or about 15 percent) to 493 AUMs and its availability to livestock would be improved.

ADVERSE IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Noise and visual disturbance from vehicular traffic and parked vehicles near Cherry Falls would have unavoidable impacts on wilderness values under the Proposed Action. Other impacts would be either minor, positive, or avoidable.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

If the WSA is not designated wilderness, all present short-term uses will continue including motorized vehicle use in the vicinity of Cherry Falls and livestock grazing operations. While these activities will cause some surface disturbance, they will not significantly impair long-term productivity - soil productivity or hydrologic characteristics.

IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

No irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources are anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

The primary concern under the All Wilderness Alternative relates to the long-term protection of wilderness values and changes in recreational use patterns.

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

Wilderness values within the 4,905-acre Sheep Ridge WSA would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. The moderate impacts to wilderness values described for the proposed action would not occur because the access road to Cherry Falls would be closed and there would be no prescribed burning. Naturalness and solitude would be enhanced by the absence of the site and sounds of vehicles at Cherry Falls and revegetation of the access road. However, as described under Impacts on Recreational Use, below, there would be a parking problem on the North Fork Road that would result in some visual and noise disturbance within the WSA.

Impacts from fire suppression activities would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action (page 2A-17) but would be less likely to occur because the use of mechanized equipment would be more restricted in designated wilderness. Impacts from the maintenance of fences around historical structures, and the three spring developments would be as described for the Proposed action.

Conclusion: Wilderness values would be well preserved. They would be enhanced by the removal of vehicle access at Cherry Falls and would avoid the impacts of prescribed burning.

IMPACTS ON RECREATIONAL USE

Recreational use would remain at about 600 visitor days per year, almost all at Cherry Falls on the North Fork of the Kaweah River. However, closure of the route to the parking area above Cherry Falls will cause severe parking problems along the North Fork Road. CDF fire emergency vehicles have had problems in the past gaining access beyond the Cherry Falls turnoff (to reach NPS and private lands upstream) due to parking congestion along the North Fork Road. Non-motorized recreation within the WSA would not otherwise be impacted. No other ORV routes exist in the WSA, therefore, no further impact will occur.

Maintenance of the fences around the Advance Colony historic site will continue to protect the structures from vandalism, thereby preserving their scenic and historic values for visitor appreciation.

Conclusion: Recreational use would remain at about 600 visitor days per year mostly at Cherry Falls. There would be parking problems on the North Fork Road.

IMPACTS ON LIVESTOCK GRAZING OPERATIONS

Impacts on grazing operations would be the same as described for the Proposed Action, except that there would be no prescribed burning and, thus, no increase in forage from the current 425 AUM level.

Conclusion: Livestock forage within the WSA would remain at 425 AUMs, but its availability to livestock would be improved.

PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

The primary concern under the Partial Wilderness Alternative relates to the long-term protection of wilderness values and the impact of recreational use at Cherry Falls.

Sheep Ridge

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

Wilderness values on 4,702 acres of the WSA would be protected by legislative mandate while 200 acres would not receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness. Impacts to the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation would be the same as those described for the All Wilderness Alternative on page 2A-18, except that vehicular access to Cherry Falls would not be prohibited and the impacts from use of that access would be as described on page 2A-18 under the Proposed Action.

Conclusion: Impacts on wilderness values would be the same as under the All Wilderness Alternative, except that there would be continuing moderate adverse impacts from vehicular traffic and parking near Cherry Falls (about one percent to the WSA).

IMPACTS ON RECREATIONAL USE

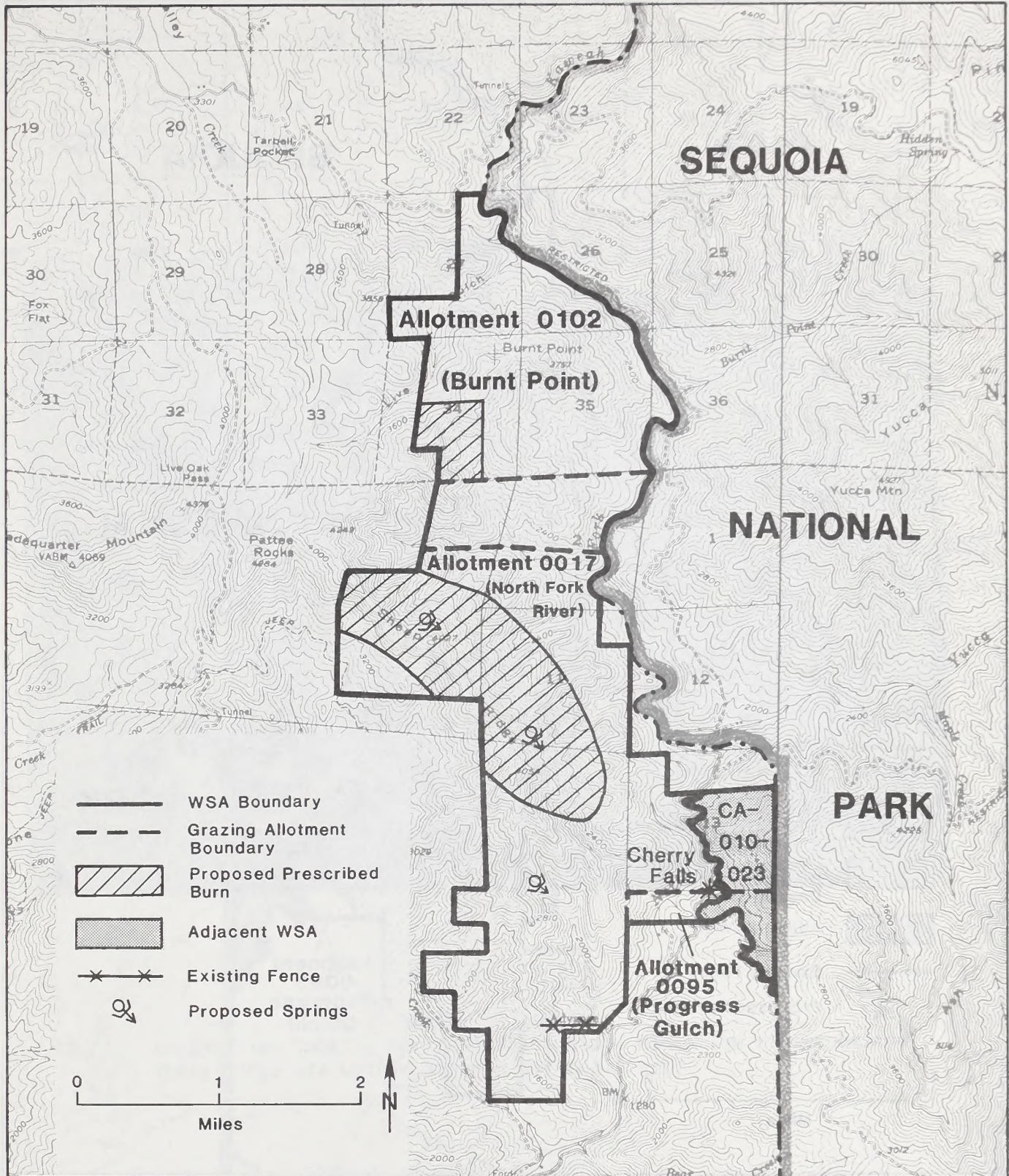
The impacts on recreational use would be the same as those described for the Proposed Action on page 2A-17.

Conclusion: Recreational use impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.

IMPACTS ON LIVESTOCK GRAZING OPERATIONS

The impacts on livestock grazing operations would be the same as those described for the All Wilderness Alternative on page 2A-18.

Conclusion: Impacts on livestock grazing would be the same as for the All Wilderness Alternative.

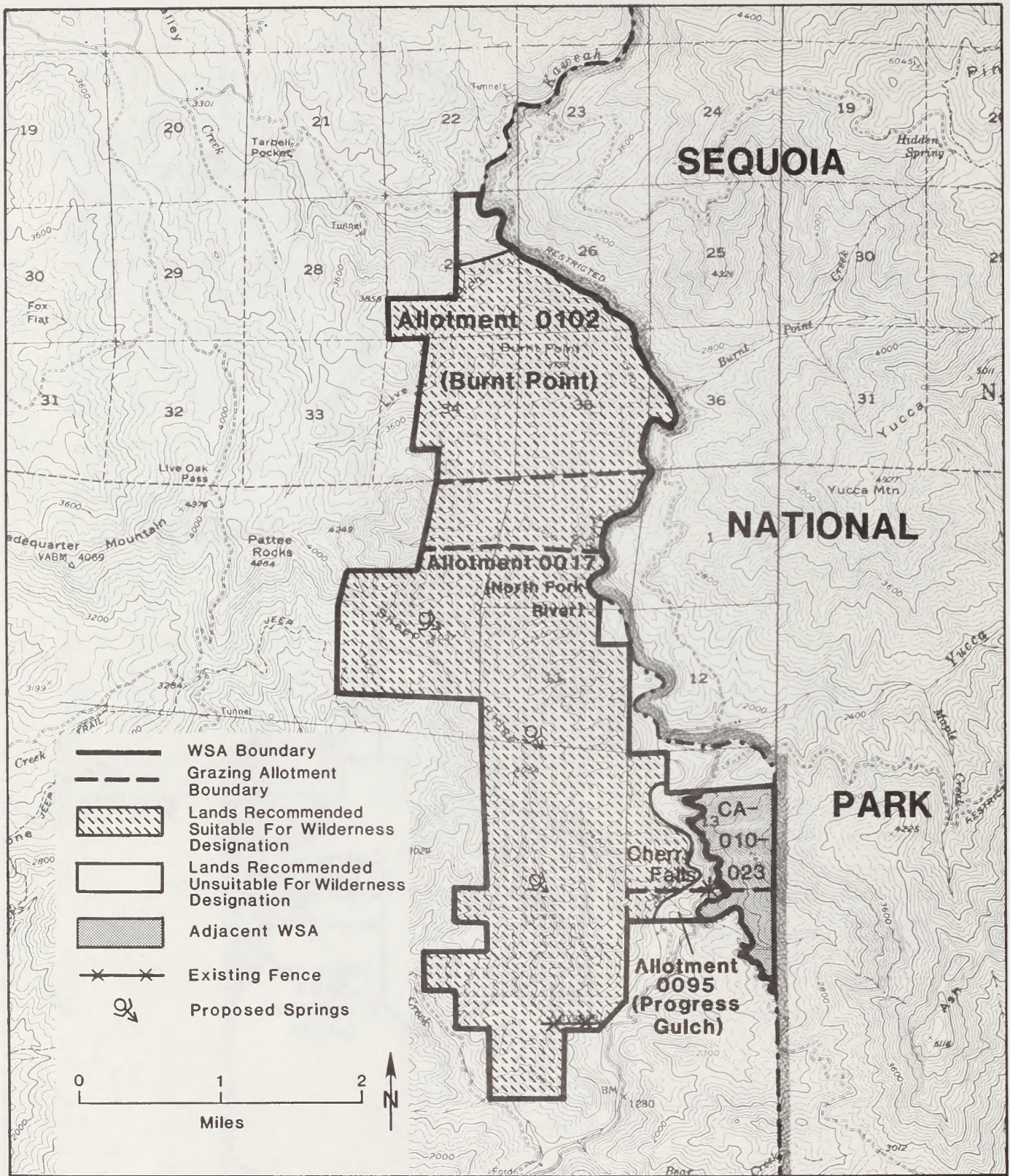


MAP 2

SHEEP RIDGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

CA-010-022

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)



MAP 3

SHEEP RIDGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA CA-010-022

Sheep Ridge PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE



Photo 1. Aerial view looking north to Sheep Ridge WSA. The ridges behind Sheep Ridge are within Sequoia National Park.

Sheep Ridge



Photo 2. Cherry Falls, on the North Fork of the Kaweah River, in the extreme southeast portion of Sheep Ridge WSA. Approximately 1 mile of the river is within the WSA.

Sheep Ridge

MILK RANCH/CASE MOUNTAIN WSA
(CA-010-023)

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA contains 5,742 acres in four separate blocks adjoining the western boundary of Sequoia National Park. The four blocks are: North Fork, Milk Ranch, Case Mountain and South Blocks. The North Fork Block is bounded on its western boundary by the Tulare County maintained North Fork Road and private land, on the north by private land, and on the east by Sequoia National Park. The Milk Ranch Peak Block is bounded on the north and east by Sequoia National Park and private land. The Case Mountain Block is bounded by the Case Mountain Road and private lands on the west, by private lands on the north and south, and by Sequoia National Park and private land on the east. The South Block is bounded by private land on the north, west, and south, and by Sequoia National Park on the east. See Map 4.

Topography varies within the unit from steep, rugged mountains (Milk Ranch Peak, Case Mountain) to the lower, more rolling hills in the north. Vegetation supporting oak woodland and scattered chaparral communities and the higher mountains supporting coniferous forests. A few stands of Giant Sequoia occupy portions of the Case Mountain block. Numerous intermittent creeks transect the areas, supporting riparian growth along the banks.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

For Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA, the following issues were identified during the scoping process and selected for analysis in the EIS.

- Impacts on Wilderness Values

Wilderness designation or non-designation of the WSA could have beneficial or adverse impacts on its wilderness values.

- Impacts on Timber Resources

The Case Mountain block contains a portion (30-40 large specimens) of a grove of Giant Sequoias that have high scenic, human interest and scientific values. Removal of ladder fuels around the larger trees in this grove has been determined to be necessary by the South Sierra Management Framework Plan to safeguard against major fires. The impact of wilderness or non-wilderness designation upon the future actions planned for the Case Mountain grove is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Additional issues were assessed to determine their significance for analysis in the EIS. However, upon further consideration they were not selected for detailed analysis. A brief discussion of each issue and the reason for dismissing it from analysis in the EIS follows.

- Impacts on Fire Suppression Activities

Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation

would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does not impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management.

- Impact on Mineral Resource Development

An issue dealing with the development of the area's mineral resources was considered but dropped from further analysis. The Bureau's Mining Claim Index of April 8, 1987 lists only one placer mining claim within the WSA (claim not considered up-to-date and is therefore invalid). The area's potential for valuable minerals is considered low. For these reasons the issue was dropped.

- Impact on Wildlife Habitat Improvement Projects

An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of wildlife habitat improvement projects (including prescribed burning) in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on maintenance/ monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.

SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

Development of the Proposed Action is guided by requirements of the Bureau's Planning Regulations, 43 CFR Part 1600. The BLM's Wilderness Study Policy (published February 3, 1982, in the Federal Register) supplements the planning regulations by providing specific factors to be considered during the planning sequence in developing suitability recommendations.

In this document, the No Action Alternative, as required by the National Environmental Protection Act, and the No Wilderness Alternative are equivalent. Both advocate continuation of management as outlined in the existing RMP and recommendation of the WSAs as nonsuitable for wilderness.

The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Partial Wilderness Alternatives can make suitable or nonsuitable recommendations ranging between the All Wilderness and No Action Alternatives. A Partial Wilderness Alternative can recommend as suitable for wilderness designation something less than the entire acreage of one WSA.

The following Proposed Action and Alternative for the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous were selected for analysis in this EIS.

Milk Ranch

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

0 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
680 Acres Nonwilderness

The Proposed Action for Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 5,742 acres would be designated wilderness. The entire area would continue to be managed for multiple-use as described on page 2B-6 in this document and the South Sierra Foothills MFP.

The rationale for this proposal includes: (1) The wilderness values of the area are not considered outstanding, (2) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources, and (3) management of the area as wilderness would be difficult because of the likelihood of intrusions from adjacent private lands.

This proposal has been discussed informally with local NPS personnel, and they concur that it is compatible with current Park management plans.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

5,742 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
0 Acres Nonwilderness

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 5,742 acres would be designated wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

The small size, irregular shape and dissected nature of the four blocks of public land that make up the 5,742 acre Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA did not offer opportunities to develop a partial wilderness alternative. All possible partial alternatives were found to lack sufficient size or manageable configurations, after exclusion of unmanageable portions, to be realistically considered for wilderness. Therefore, no additional alternatives were developed for analysis in the EIS.

Milk Ranch

THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

Since the pattern of future actions within the WSA cannot be predicted with certainty, we have made projections of management actions to allow the analysis of impacts under the Proposed Action and alternative. These projections are the basis of the impacts identified in this EIS. They represent reasonably feasible patterns of activities which could occur under the Proposed Action and alternative analyzed assuming there is adequate funding. This document does not constitute a management plan. BLM is not necessarily committed to the management actions listed and is not restricted from implementing additional actions which are not listed.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

None of the 5,742 acres of public land in the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA are recommended for wilderness designation (Map 4). Under this proposal, the lands will be managed in accordance with the existing South Sierra Foothills MFP (1983). Recreational ORV use will remain "limited" to existing routes of travel. No effort will be made to obtain legal access easements for ORV use. Lands will remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mining laws, though the mineral potential is low. Full fire suppression using mechanized equipment will be practiced and existing levels of livestock use will be maintained.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

As part of a larger project to protect the Sequoia Grove outside the WSA, about 20 acres of timber stand improvement (to include a reduction of some ladder fuels that could endanger scattered Giant Sequoias in a wildfire) is proposed for the Case Mountain block. Some mechanized equipment may be necessary in this project.

RECREATIONAL USE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Recreational ORV use will remain "limited" to existing routes of travel. A small amount of ORV related use, approximately 20 user days per year, occurs on the North Fork block of the WSA on approximately 1/4 mile of existing trail. The other three blocks that make up the WSA have no legal access for recreational use and no ORV activity is known to occur. The WSA will also be open for non-motorized recreation in the form of hunting and hiking; approximately 80 visitor days per year occur on the North Fork block. However, little or no such use occurs on the other three blocks because on the north, south, and west they are surrounded by private land (no legal access) and on the east the Park lands are rugged with no trails.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Mechanized equipment for suppression and pre-suppression activities under contract to the California Department of Forestry would continue to be utilized. There are currently no fire breaks within the WSA and none are planned. Also see Vegetation Management Actions.

Milk Ranch

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Two to three spring developments (headboxes) would be constructed in drainages to retain water for wildlife use. These would be built with rock from the immediate vicinity of the project area. Cement would be used to construct the improvement. The length of the retaining wall would not exceed 10 feet and height no more than 5 feet.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

No actions are planned related to cultural resource management other than review of other project proposals that might impact cultural resources.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, all 5,742 acres would be open to mineral exploration and development under the mining and mineral leasing laws. Surface disturbance would be limited to one placer claim; very little increase in prospecting is anticipated. Surface disturbance would not exceed 5 acres. No significant exploration or development is anticipated because of the steep terrain lack of legal access opportunities, and the low mineral potentials involved.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Approximately 5,414 acres of the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA will continue to be used for livestock grazing. Livestock use will continue to be maintained at the existing level of 424 AUMs for cattle on three grazing allotments.

There are no existing range projects to maintain within the WSA.

Two new range improvement projects would be implemented. A 800 acre prescribed burn would be conducted in chaparral on the Case Mountain Block, resulting in an expected increase of 80 AUMs of livestock forage. This burn would be done every 10-15 years.

A new spring development would be constructed in the middle of the prescribed burn area. The spring development is needed to improve livestock distribution on the allotment. The spring would be constructed and maintained by horseback, since no vehicle routes exist near the proposed sites.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 5,742 acres of public land in the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Under this alternative the area would be closed to motorized recreational use. Motorized vehicles and mechanical equipment, however, would be permitted for mineral exploration and development on placer claims if found valid. In addition, existing levels of livestock grazing would continue.

Milk Ranch

RECREATIONAL USE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The 1/4 mile of existing ORV trail in the North Fork block would be closed. Approximately 20 user days would be displaced from the WSA. The other three blocks of public land in the WSA would not be effected in that no ORV activity is known to occur. Non-motorized recreation would be the same as under the Proposed Action. Hunting and hiking account for approximately 80 visitor days per year on the North Fork block. However, little or no such use occurs on the other three blocks because on the west and south they are surrounded by private land (no legal access) and the Park Service lands are rugged with no access trails.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Under this alternative, a fire management plan would be written for the WSA and would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crews would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when the terrain and soil conditions would permit such travel without damage to vegetative cover. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high-value property and only with the approval of the District Manager. Existing routes would be used as firebreaks but would not be maintained and would be allowed to return to their natural state. No new firebreaks would be constructed.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The wildlife management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The vegetation management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action except that mechanized equipment would not be used.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The cultural resource management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 5,742 acres would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. A validity exam would be preformed on the one placer claim in the WSA. No mineral development actions are planned.

Milk Ranch

LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as for the Proposed Action, except that the 800-acre prescribed burn would not be allowed.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The major impacts of the Proposed Action and alternative are summarized in Table 2. The most important impacts involve prescribed burning under the Proposed Action.

TABLE 2. COMPARISON OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND THE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE MILK RANCH/CASE MOUNTAIN WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>The wilderness values of the WSA as a whole would receive minor to negligible impacts. Most of the impacts (such as those from ORV use of the 1/4 mile trail in the North Fork block and the spring developments) would be very localized. Prescribed burning would disrupt naturalness on 15 percent of the area for some visitors very 10-15 years, but the impact would be temporary (less than two years).</p>	<p>Impacts on wilderness values would be the same as under the Proposed Action, except that there would be no impact from ORV use and the impacts from prescribed burning would be reduced over 95 percent (less than one percent of the WSA would be affected).</p>
Impacts on Timber Resources	<p>The Giant Sequoia trees in the Case Mountain block would face a moderately reduced risk of wildfire.</p>	<p>The impact on timber resources would be the same as under the Proposed Action.</p>

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

WILDERNESS VALUES

NATURALNESS

The unit, as a whole, has generally retained its natural character. Man's works, which include a few unimproved vehicle routes, are substantially unnoticeable due to screening by either terrain or vegetation. In most of the parcels, access is limited by private land boundaries or rugged terrain, thereby preventing human encroachment.

SOLITUDE

Opportunities for solitude are generally limited due to the scattered nature of these four small WSA blocks, as well as their irregular configuration, and penetrating nature of the non-public land pattern.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION

As with solitude, the irregular configuration, small parcel sizes, and penetrating nature of the non-public land pattern hamper opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation within the WSA.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The WSA provides winter range for the Mineral King Deer Herd.

TIMBER RESOURCES

The Case Mountain Sequoia groves are unique and have high scenic, human interest and scientific values. These values have been found in the resource area's management framework plan to far outweigh the value of the larger trees for timber production. Future removal of ladder fuels has been proposed to further protect the Sequoia grove in the WSA. No vegetative manipulation has yet taken place within the WSA.

OTHER VEGETATION

The vegetative cover varies with changes in elevation and from block to block. The North Fork block is primarily covered by oak woodland with some open grasslands on the western edge, with higher elevations covered with mixed chaparral. The Milk Ranch block has some mixed conifer and oak woodland near the NPS Milk Ranch Peak Lookout with mixed chaparral on the majority of block. The Case Mountain block has mixed conifers with several small Sequoia Redwood groves on north facing slopes with dense chaparral elsewhere. The South block has mostly dense chaparral covered slopes. No RTE vegetation is found in the WSA.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The WSA is entirely made up of public lands administered by the BLM. No

Milk Ranch

private inholdings exist. Each block (except the South block) has road access to the WSA boundary. These roads all cross private lands to reach the WSAs with no public legal access (except to the North Fork block on the North Fork Road.

The Milk Ranch block borders an area of designated wilderness with Sequoia National Park along the WSAs north and east boundaries. The other three blocks adjoin NPS lands that have not been recommended for wilderness designation, though the possibility of Congressionally sponsored wilderness legislation in these areas still exists.

RECREATION

Due to a general lack of legal access, the WA is used by only an estimated 100 visitor days per year, mostly in the form of hunting along the North Fork block. Vehicles are used on the Milk Ranch Peak Road and the Case Mountain Road to each an NPS fire lookout and logging areas respectively, but this is not considered recreational use. No ORV opportunities exist in the Milk Ranch, Case Mountain or South blocks. The North Fork block is utilized by approximately 20 user days per year on all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles using the road along the block's southern boundary and approximately 1/4 mile of existing trail immediately north of the road. This use occurs mostly in the winter and has been infrequent.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The WSA lies within the ethnographic territory occupied by two Western Mono Indian groups. The Patwisha primarily inhabited the area, although the Waksachi cultural group occupied the northern periphery of the WSA. One archaeological site (bedrock mortar milling complex and midden) is recorded within the confines of the WSA, however, numerous cultural sites are known to occur in the region along the Kaweah River. Sites commonly encountered in this region include food processing stations, temporary camps and seasonal hunting and gathering loci. No current use of the WSA area by Native Americans is known.

Historically, the Three Rivers area underwent exploitation in the 1850's when settlers came into the area. In the 1870's silver was discovered bringing more people into the vicinity of Three Rivers. Historical documents indicate the Mineral King Wagon Road trends along the southern periphery of the WSA. The road initially developed in Circa 1874, providing access from Visalia to the Mineral King area. No additional historical resource are known to occur in the WSA.

Historical and archaeological research data for this region, suggest the cultural sensitivity for the WSA to range between moderate to high. No National Register of Historic Places properties are known to occur in the WSA.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual Resources within the WSA are prescribed to be managed under Visual

Milk Ranch

Resource Management Classes II and IV on the North Fork block, Class III and IV on the Milk Ranch block, and Class III on the Case Mountain and South blocks.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife species typical to the area includes mule deer, black bear, cottontail rabbit, brush rabbit, valley and mountain quail, mountain lion, bobcat, wild turkey, mourning dove and band-tailed pigeon. Non-migratory California mule deer occur throughout the study area. In addition, the Milk Ranch Block includes approximately one-half of the Oak Grove, Red Hill winter range of the migratory Mineral King deer herd. The deer population was estimated at 350 animals during the summer of 1969. The Case Mountain block includes a wild pig concentration area and a crucial band-tail pigeon nesting area. Western gray squirrels occur throughout the block. Southern spotted owls are known to occur within one mile of the Case Mountain block.

SOILS AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils in the WSA are predominantly shallow (< 20" deep) on south and west slopes, and moderately deep to very deep (20-80" deep) on north and east slopes. Surface textures are sandy loam or loam. The soils have formed in place from granitic bedrock and many rock outcrops occur in the area. The SCS soil map for the area records the following soil mapping units:

- Cieneba - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 75% slopes
- Crouch coarse sandy loam, 30 to 50% slopes
- Crouch - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 50% slopes
- Holland loam, 30 to 50% slopes
- Holland - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 50% slopes
- Sheephead - Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 75% slopes
- Rock outcrop

Soil classifications are as follows:

- Cieneba - loamy, mixed, non-acid, thermic, shallow Typic Xerorthers
- Crouch - coarse-loamy, mixed, mesic Ultic Haploxerolls
- Holland - fine-loamy, mixed, mesic Ultic Haploxerolls
- Sheephead - loamy, mixed, mesic, shallow Entic Ultic Haploxerolls

The erosion hazard for these soils is high to very high under bare soil conditions because of the steep slopes, high rainfall (30-40"/year), and high detachability of these granitic soils.

The area lies within the watersheds of the South Fork, East Fork, Middle Fork, and North Fork Kaweah River, as well as Salt Creek. The general condition of the watershed is good because of the lack of disturbed soil.

MINERALS AND ENERGY

Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA is predominantly underlain by granitic rocks, of the Sierra Nevada Batholith, except for the eastern edge of sections 1,

Milk Ranch

12 and 13 in the Case Mountain Block where metasedimentary rocks occur. The metamorphic rocks and their contact with granitic rocks represent a geologic environment favorable for locatable minerals such as gold, silver, and tungsten. The Bureau's Mining Claim Index of April 8, 1987 lists one placer mining claim (CA MC 161815) in SEction 11 T 17 S., R 29 E, located 1984, latest assessment 1985. This claim is apparently not up-to-date on assessment work filing and could be administratively declared abandoned and void. Development potential for mineral resources is considered to be low.

Salable minerals -- see Sheep Ridge
Locatable minerals -- see Sheep Ridge

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Over 5,000 acres within the WSA are included in three grazing allotments. Season of use varies from year long to March through June. About 450 AUMs (all cattle) are applicable to the WSA. Only the small south block of the WSA does not have livestock grazing. There are no existing range projects within the WSA, but a spring and a prescribed burn are proposed for the Case Mountain block (see Management Actions on page 2B-7).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section focuses directly on the issues identified through the scoping process. The environmental impacts of each alternative are described issue by issue. The environmental impacts of these alternatives on the area's other resources have also been analyzed and have been found to be insignificant.

Because of the general nature of this analysis and the lack of numerical and statistical information regarding the area's resources, impacts in this section are often expressed in relative terms. For the purpose of this analysis the meanings of these terms are as follows:

- Negligible or slight impact - the degree of anticipated environmental impact is considered less than minor.
- Minor impact - comparatively unimportant; in terms of the area's wildlife resources, a minor impact is one affecting a specific group of individuals of a population in a localized area for one generation or less; the integrity of the regional population is not likely to be affected.
- Moderate impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a change in the abundance of a resource or its distribution. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of a portion of the regional or local population would change over more than one generation, but would not affect the integrity of the regional population as a whole.
- Major impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a decline in the abundance of a resource or a change in distribution of a resource. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of the regional or local population of a species would decline beyond which natural recruitment would not likely return that population to its former level within several generations.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

The primary concern under the Proposed Action is the protection of wilderness values and a portion of a grove of Giant Sequoia.

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

The Proposed Action for the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA will not result in any of the 5,742 acres within the WSA being designated wilderness. None of the wilderness values will receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation.

The wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreational opportunities, and special features (the Mineral King Deer Herd) of the WSA as a whole would receive minor to negligible negative impacts from the management actions listed on pages 2B-6 and 2B-7. ORV use would be restricted almost entirely to the existing 1/4 mile trail in the North Fork Block where the sight and sound of such use (limited to about 20 user days per year) where it would temporarily and very locally (less than one percent) of the WSA disrupt naturalness and solitude. Traffic along the North Fork Road will also affect the North Fork parcel's solitude. Hunting and fishing activities would also have a minimal impact on solitude. Solitude will be retained in the Milk Ranch, Case Mountain and South blocks by the absence of ORV activity.

Access to the North Fork block will continue to provide the opportunity for primitive recreational experiences. This block of the WSA, however, is very small and covered with thick chaparral on its higher slopes, thereby limited P.R.O.s. Limited access opportunities hinder the P.R.O.s in the Milk Ranch, Case Mountain and South blocks.

The Mineral King deer herd could receive some disturbance by ORV use but the impact would be negligible because of the extreme limited and localized nature of the ORV use.

Minor positive impacts to the Mineral King deer herd are anticipated from the an increase in forage availability and quality from prescribed burning. These benefits would be counterbalanced at least partially by the livestock AUM increase. (See the Grazing Management Actions on page 2B-7.)

Fire suppression will have a minor impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used, but will be reduced by post-suppression reclamation (including machine seeding). The 820 acres of prescribed burns would have a severe (in the minds of those who view fire as not natural) but temporary impact on naturalness, but that impact would be eliminated within two years as natural revegetation occurred and the burns would enhance wilderness values by protecting the Giant Sequoias (through fuel reduction) and preserving natural ecosystems.

The spring developments would cause local and very minor disruption of naturalness (less than 10 acres would be affected) and would benefit wilderness values by minor enhancement of wildlife populations.

Surface disturbance from mineral prospecting would amount to less than five acres per year (average of 1-2 acres). Such disturbance would be localized, reclaimable, and have minor to negligible impact on the WSA as a whole.

Conclusion: The wilderness values of the WSA as a whole would receive minor to negligible impacts. Most of the impacts (such as those from ORV use of the 1/4 mile trail in the North Fork block and the spring developments) would be very localized. Prescribed burning would disrupt naturalness on 15 percent of the area for some visitor every 10-15 years, but the impact would be temporary (less than two years).

IMPACTS ON TIMBER RESOURCES

The approximately 20 acres of scattered Giant Sequoia trees in the Case Mountain block would benefit from timber stand improvement (including fuel reduction) that would moderately reduce the risk of wildfire. The 800 acres of prescribed burning in chaparral on the Case Mountain block every 10-15 years would also reduce the risk of fire spreading to the Sequoias as would the anticipated fire suppression activities (under contract with CDF).

Conclusion: The Giant Sequoia trees in the Case Mountain block would face a moderately reduced risk of wildfire.

ADVERSE IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

The only adverse impacts which could not be avoided should the Proposed Action (return of the WSA to multiple-use) be implemented is the anticipated surface disturbance (less than five acres per year) and the resultant disruption of wilderness values from mineral actions (prescribed burning, installation of spring developments, etc.) are discretionary and they and their impacts could be avoided.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

While implementation of the management actions would cause some surface disturbance, it would not significantly impair long-term productivity - soil productivity or hydrologic characteristics. It is expected that the range of options available to future managers will be essentially the same as it is today.

IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

No irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources are anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

The primary concern under the All Wilderness Alternative is the protection of wilderness values and a portion of a grove of Giant Sequoias.

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 5,742 acres of the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and all values would be protected by legislative mandate. ORV use would be prohibited, prescribed burning would be greatly reduced and the area would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws, subject to valid existing rights which it is predicted would not exist for the one existing claim.

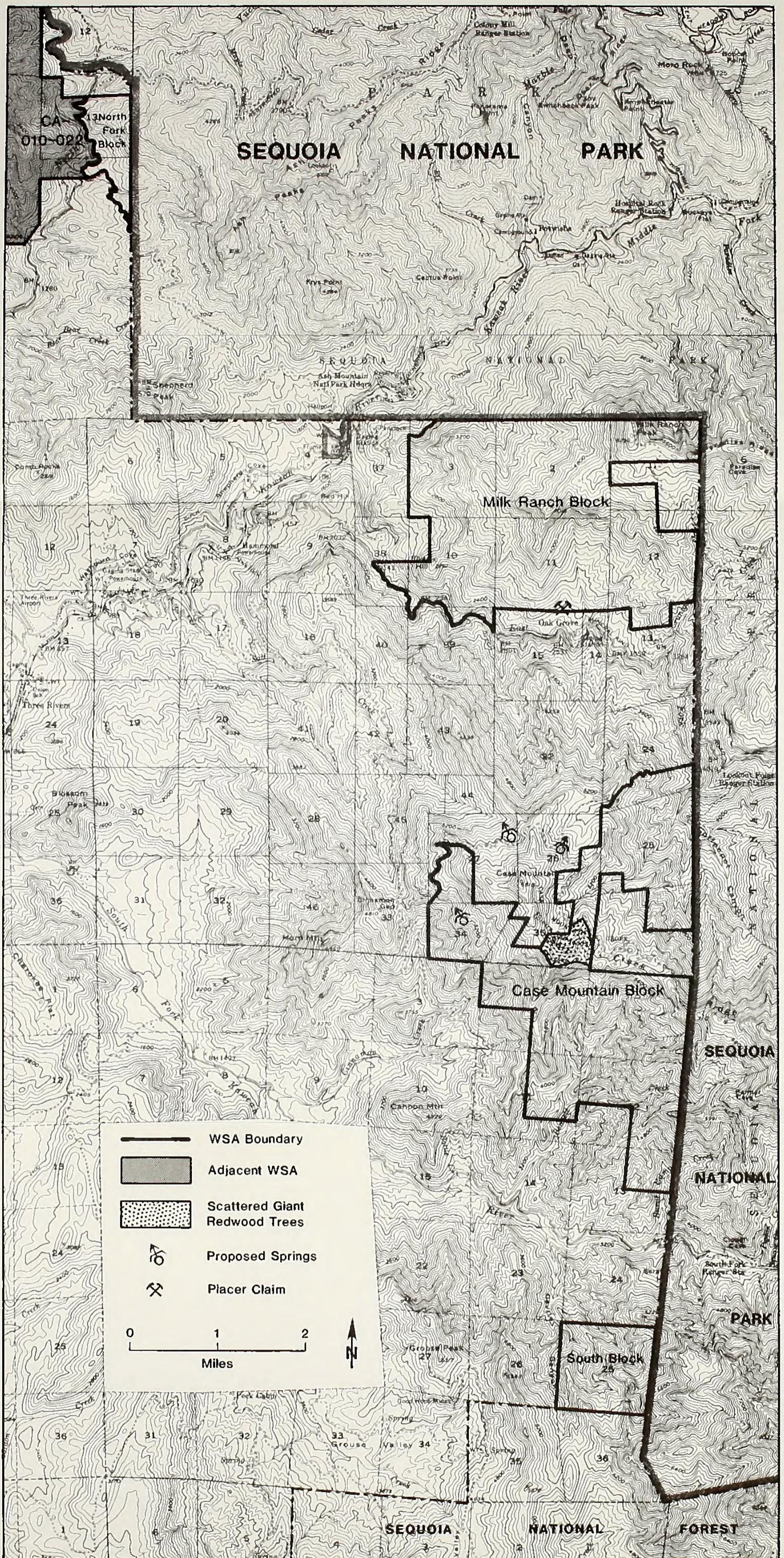
Impacts to the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreational opportunities, and special features (the Mineral King Deer Herd) would be the same as described under the Proposed Action on page 2B-16, except that there would be no impacts from on-site ORV use and the impacts from prescribed burning would be greatly reduced - only about 20 acres in the vicinity of the Giant Sequoias would be burned every 10 years. Impacts from fire suppression would also be less because heavy mechanized equipment would be even less likely to be used.

Conclusion: Impacts on wilderness values would be the same as under the Proposed Action, except that there would be no impact from ORV use and the impacts from prescribed burning would be reduced over 95 percent (less than one percent of the WSA would be affected).

IMPACTS ON TIMBER RESOURCES

Impacts on timber resources would be the same as described for the Proposed Action on page 2B-17, except that there would be a negligible decrease in the level of protection of the Giant Sequoias because the Grazing Management Actions would not include the prescribed burning of 800 acres every 10-15 years.

Conclusion: The impact on timber resources would be the same as under the Proposed Action.



MAP 4
MILK RANCH/CASE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
CA-010-023
PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)





Photo 3. Case Mountain block of the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA. Aerial view looking south into mixed conifer forest including some Giant Sequoias.



Photo 4. Aerial view looking west to Milk Ranch Peak.

VENTANA CONTIGUOUS WSA
(CA-040-308)

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The WSA unit is approximately 702 acres and is located about ten miles southwest of Carmel Valley. It is bounded on three sides by private land. To the south a 1/2 mile common boundary exists with the Ventana Wilderness Area of the Los Padres National Forest. See Map 5.

The landscape is dominated by a rugged steep ridge which runs between two canyons formed by Black Rock Creek and the South Fork of Black Rock Creek. The majority of the terrain may be characterized as steep slopes with the principle vegetation consisting of chamise, buck brush, and manzanita. Large pines, oaks, and sycamores occur along the creeks.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

For the Ventana Contiguous WSA, the following issues were identified during the scoping process and selected for analysis in the EIS.

- Impacts on Wilderness Values

Wilderness designation or non-designation of the WSA could have beneficial or adverse impacts on its wilderness values.

- Impacts on ORV Access

Approximately 40 visitor days of ORV use per year are estimated to occur within the Ventana Contiguous WSA in conjunction with about 160 visitor days of hunting use. All of this use is associated with the White Rock Gun Club, an adjacent private landowner which uses the public lands for hunting, via a primitive route of travel in the WSA.

Additional issues were assessed to determine their significance for analysis in the EIS. However, upon further consideration they were not selected for detailed analysis. A brief discussion of each issue and the reason for dismissing it from analysis in the EIS follows:

- Impacts on Mineral Resource Development

Development of mineral resources within designated wilderness areas could be affected by wilderness management restrictions. However, the potential for mineral resources within the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA is considered low, and no mining claims or mineral cases exist in the WSA. Therefore, this issue was dropped from further consideration.

- Impacts on Fire Management Actions

Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire suppression activities. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as

not to significantly constrain effective fire management. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis.

SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE

Development of the Proposed Action is guided by requirements of the Bureau's Planning Regulations, 43 CFR Part 1600. The BLM's Wilderness Study Policy (published February 3, 1982, in the Federal Register) supplements the planning regulations by providing specific factors to be considered during the planning sequence in developing suitability recommendations.

In this document, the No Action Alternative, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and the No Wilderness Alternative are equivalent. Both advocate continuation of management as outlined in the existing RMP and recommendation of the WSA as nonsuitable for wilderness.

The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Partial Wilderness Alternatives can make suitable or nonsuitable recommendations ranging between the All Wilderness and No Action Alternatives. A Partial Wilderness Alternative can recommend as suitable for wilderness designation something less than the entire acreage of one WSA.

The following Proposed Action and Alternative for the Ventana Contiguous WSA were selected for analysis in this EIS.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

0 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
702 Acres Nonwilderness

The Proposed Action for the Ventana Contiguous WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 702 acres would be designated wilderness (Map 5). The entire area would continue to be managed for multiple use as described on page 2C-6 in this document and in the Hollister Resource Management Plan (1984).

The rationale for this proposal include: (1) The wilderness values of the area are not considered outstanding; and (2) the current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources.

The Los Padres National Forest has indicated the lack of outstanding wilderness values and the boundary configurations of the WSA would prevent it from enhancing their management of the adjacent Ventana Wilderness Area (see Map 5).

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

702 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
0 Acres Nonwilderness

Ventana

The All Wilderness Alternative would designate the entire 702 acres in the Ventana Contiguous WSA as wilderness. The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

No additional alternatives were developed for the 702 acre Ventana Contiguous WSA. Due to the WSA's small size and compact shape, a partial wilderness alternative was not identified that would improve wilderness values by segregating areas with significant wilderness values.

THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

Since the pattern of future management actions within the WSA cannot be predicted with certainty, projections of management actions have been made to allow analysis of impacts under the Proposed Action and alternative. These projections are the basis of the impacts identified in the EIS. They represent reasonably feasible patterns of activities which could occur and the Proposed Action and alternative analyzed.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

0 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
702 Acres Non-wilderness

Under the Proposed Action none of the 702 acres within the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA will be designated as wilderness. The area will be managed for multiple-use under the guidance of the Hollister Resource Management Plan (RMP).

RECREATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Current uses within the WSA would be allowed to continue. The existing primitive route of travel (which originates on private lands - the White Rock Gun Club) would remain open to vehicular access across 1/4 mile of the WSA. There is no public vehicular access to the area. An estimated 200 visitor days per year occur within the WSA; this amount of visitation is mostly in the form of hunting and associated ORV access. Development of recreational facilities, such as campgrounds, is not anticipated because of the low use the area receives.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Fire suppression within the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA including the use of mechanized fire equipment, will continue to be provided by the California Department of Forestry (under contract to the BLM). No roads or trails will be improved for fire management nor will any firebreaks be constructed. No presuppression activities are planned for the WSA.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

No wildlife management actions are planned in the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

No grazing is authorized within the WSA; therefore, no actions are planned.

MINERAL/ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

The entire 702 acres within the WSA would be open to all forms of mineral entry; however, the potential for mineral resources is considered low. There are no mining claims located in the WSA. There are also no oil and gas leases nor lease applications filed for lands within the WSA.

Ventana

Therefore, while exploration and development of mineral resources would be permitted, there is no mineral/entry activity anticipated within a 15-20 year planning project.

FUELS/WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

In accordance with the BLM "10-Year Prescribed Burn Plan for Fresno and Monterey Counties" (1984), 100 acres within the WSA would be burned every two years until the entire area was burned in mosaics on about a 15 year cycle.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

There are no cultural resource management actions planned due to low cultural sensitivity within the WSA.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

702 Acres Recommended for Wilderness Designation
0 Acres Non-wilderness

The entire 702 acre Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA would be designated wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be designated wilderness. The WSA would be managed in conjunction with the USFS Ventana Wilderness Area to preserve wilderness values. Designation would prohibit all motorized recreation within the 680 acre WSA. This would prohibit vehicular access by members of the White Rock Gun Club who presently use the area for hunting alone.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Wilderness designation would prohibit all motorized recreation within the 702 acre WSA. This would prohibit vehicular access by members of the White Rock Gun Club who presently use the 1/4 mile primitive vehicle route in the WSA for hunting purposes.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Under this alternative, a fire management plan would be written for the WSA and would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crews would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when the terrain and soil conditions would permit such travel without damage to vegetative cover. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high-value property and only with the approval of the District Manager.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

As described under the Proposed Action, there would be no wildlife management actions.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

As described under the Proposed Action, there would be no grazing management actions.

MINERALS/ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

The entire 702 acres within the WSA would be closed to all forms of mineral entry, including mineral leasing. There are no mining claims or mineral leases within the WSA. Based on the low potential for mineral resources in the WSA it is not anticipated that any mineral discovery would occur prior to wilderness designation that would establish valid existing rights. Therefore, no mineral development would occur under wilderness designation.

FUELS/WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Same as the Proposed Action.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

As described under the Proposed Action, there would be no cultural resource management actions.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The major impacts of the alternatives are summarized in Table 3. The most important impacts involve prescribed burning under both the Proposed Action and the Alternative.

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND THE ALTERNATIVE FOR THE VENTANA CONTIGUOUS WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVES
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would receive minor to moderate impacts on about 1/4 of the WSA on a continuing basis from prescribed burning. There would be localized minor to moderate impacts from ORV access and fire suppression, if wildfires occur.	Impacts to wilderness values would be the same as for the Proposed Action, except there would be no impacts from ORV access.
Impacts on ORV Access	ORV access would be unchanged and ORV use would remain at about 40 visitor days per year with about 160 visitor days of hunting use.	ORV access would be eliminated. An estimated 175 visitor use days would continue on a walk in basis.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

WILDERNESS VALUES

NATURALNESS

Except for a 1/4 mile vehicle route in the southwest portion of the WSA, there are no imprints of man's work present within the WSA. There are major imprints of man's work near but outside the unit, including an aircraft landing strip and associated access road in Sec. 34, T. 17 S., R. 2 E., a power line on the San Clemente Ridge in Secs. 27 and 28, T. 17 S., R. 2 E., and residences associated with the White Rock Gun Club in Sec. 32, T. 17 S., R. 2 E. The area within the unit retains its primeval character and appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.

SOLITUDE

The unit is contiguous with the Ventana Wilderness Area and the outstanding opportunities of this unit are supplemented by the Ventana Wilderness Area. This unit is physically not distinct from the wilderness area and provides identical opportunities.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION

The unit offers opportunities for many forms of primitive and unconfined recreation; i.e., hunting, photography, bird watching, and general sight-seeing. Public access to enjoy these pursuits is currently very difficult due to lack of trails, private lands, heavy vegetation and would involve hiking cross-country from the Ventana Wilderness. The opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are identical in this unit and the adjacent wilderness.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA contains no special features.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA contains approximately 702 acres of public land. It is bounded on the western, northern and eastern boundaries by private lands. To the south there is a one half mile common border with the Ventana Wilderness Area - U.S. Forest Service.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no known National Register quality sites recorded on public lands in this WSA, however, significant National Register quality rock art sites may occur. The environment of the WSA is generally inhospitable, therefore, any occupation and land use probably occurred along portions of Black Rock Creek and the South Fork of Black Rock Creek during both the historic and prehistoric periods.

Ventana

RECREATION

The Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA receives about 200 visitor days annually principally from the White Rock Gun Club which is located on private land adjacent to the WSA. Access is via a primitive route of travel which originates on private land; approximately 1/4 mile crosses public land within the WSA. Access to the public is from the Ventana Wilderness Area. The WSA offers opportunities for the pursuit of additional recreational activities such as: photography, bird watching, and general sightseeing. However, access is difficult due to steep terrain and dense vegetation.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Scenery on public land parcels within the WSA is of a nature common to the region - there are no significant features. The VRM rating for this area is Class III.

VEGETATION

The primary vegetation of the unit is chamise interspersed with buck brush and manzanita. Large pines, oaks and sycamores occur along the creeks. The elevation of the unit varies from approximately 1,000 feet to 2,600 feet above sea level. The unit is associated with portions of Black Rock Creek, the South Fork of Black Rock Creek and a ridge running the two canyons.

WILDLIFE

The WSA provides habitat for the Santa Lucia deer herd. Habitat conditions are generally poor due to the thick vegetation.

MINERAL RESOURCES

There are presently no known potential mineral resources within the WSA itself. There are no mining claims known to exist within the WSA. There has been no recent exploration in the WSA and no development is anticipated. The potential for mineral resources utilization is low.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

The area is not authorized for livestock grazing.

SOILS AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

The soils of the main ridge of the Sierra de Salinas are of the Cienega - Sheridan association. The soils are moderately deep with moderate fertility. Slopes range up to 50 percent. There are no known springs within the WSA. Two small creeks dissect portions of the WSA; Black Rock Creek and South Fork - Black Rock Creek.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section focuses directly on the issues identified through the scoping process. The environmental impacts of each alternative are described issue by issue. The environmental impacts of these alternatives on the area's other resources have also been analyzed and have been found to be insignificant.

Because of the general nature of this analysis and the lack of numerical and statistical information regarding the area's resources, impacts in this section are often expressed in relative terms. For the purpose of this analysis the meanings of these terms are as follows:

- Negligible or slight impact - the degree of anticipated environmental impact is considered less than minor.
- Minor impact - comparatively unimportant; in terms of the area's wildlife resources, a minor impact is one affecting a specific group of individuals of a population in a localized area for one generation or less; the integrity of the regional population is not likely to be affected.
- Moderate impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a change in the abundance of a resource or its distribution. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of a portion of the regional or local population would change over more than one generation, but would not affect the integrity of the regional population as a whole.
- Major impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a decline in the abundance of a resource or a change in distribution of a resource. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of the regional or local population of a species would decline beyond which natural recruitment would not likely return that population to its former level within several generations.

PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)

The primary concern under the Proposed Action is the impact on wilderness values from limited ORV use and prescribed burning.

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

The Proposed Action for the Ventana Contiguous WSA would result in none of the 702 acres within the WSA being designated wilderness. None of the wilderness values would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation.

The wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and primitive recreation opportunities would receive minor to moderate impacts under the Proposed Action. Vehicle use on the 1/4 mile route through the WSA from the nearby gun club would result in noise and visual disturbance of naturalness and solitude, but the impact would be of short periodic duration and only about five percent (30-40 acres) of the WSA would be affected.

Fire suppression would have a minor impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment were used, but the impact would be reduced by post-suppression reclamation (including machine seeding). Prescribed burns on 100 acres every two years would have a short-term moderate impact on naturalness (charred and changed vegetation) affecting about 200 acres (burned area plus viewshed) for about two years or until vegetation succession provides substantial regrowth. Since the burning would be on a 15-year cycle, from 1/3 to 1/4 of the WSA would be affected in most years.

Conclusion: Wilderness values would receive minor to moderate impacts on about 1/4 of the WSA on a continuing basis from prescribed burning. There would also be minor to moderate impacts from ORV access and fire suppression, if wildfires occur.

IMPACTS ON ORV ACCESS

Under the Proposed Action the WSA would continue to receive about 200 visitor days per year including about 40 visitor days of ORV use, almost exclusively from the adjacent White Rock Gun Club. There is no legal public access to the WSA. The only adjacent public land is the Ventana Wilderness Area in the Los Padres National Forest.

Conclusion: ORV access would be unchanged and ORV use would remain at about 40 visitor days per year with about 160 visitor days of hunting use.

ADVERSE IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Extensive visual impacts from prescribed burning would reduce naturalness for most visitors to the area and could not be avoided under the Proposed Action. Minor noise and visual intrusions from the limited ORV use anticipated would have a minor unavoidable impact on naturalness and solitude.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

If the WSA is not designated wilderness all present and projected short-term uses would continue including limited motorized vehicles use and prescribed burning. While these activities would cause some surface disturbance, they would not significantly impair long-term productivity - soil productivity or hydrologic characteristics.

IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

No irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources are anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

The primary concern under the All Wilderness Alternative relates to the long-term protection of wilderness values and impacts from prescribed burning.

IMPACTS ON WILDERNESS VALUES

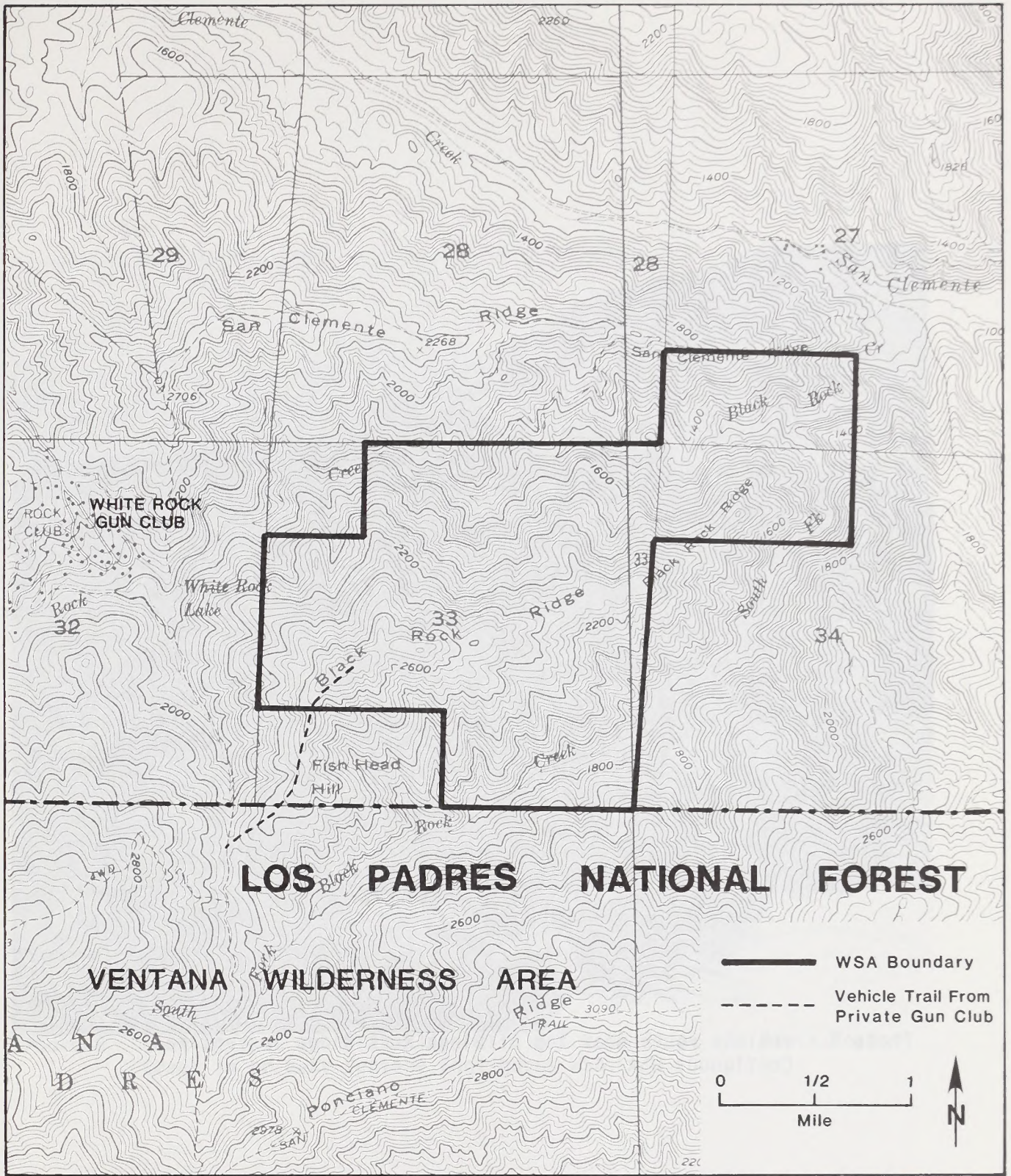
Wilderness values within the 702-acre Ventana Contiguous WSA would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Impacts to wilderness values under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described for the Proposed Action on pages 2C-12 and 2C-13, except that there would be no sound or visual impacts from ORV use.

Conclusion: Impacts to wilderness values would be the same as for the Proposed Action, except there would be no impacts from ORV access.

IMPACTS ON ORV ACCESS

Wilderness designation would result in the closure of the 1/4 mile access route from the White Rock Gun Club - an estimated 175 visitor use days would continue on a walk in basis. This would not seriously impact the hunting opportunities in the WSA.

Conclusion: ORV access would be eliminated. An estimated 175 visitor use days would continue on a walk in basis.



MAP 5
VENTANA CONTIGUOUS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
CA-040-308
PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)



Photo 5. Vehicle route near top of Black Rock Ridge in Ventana Contiguous WSA.



Photo 6. Looking east at north slope of Black Rock Ridge and Black Rock Creek in or near Ventana Contiguous WSA.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Consultation and coordination with the public and governmental agencies was a planned and integral part of the management alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS. Formal and informal consultation began in 1978 with the initial inventory of public lands to determine their wilderness potential. Much of the coordination process is discussed under Scoping on pages 1-5 through 1-7.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Throughout the preparation of the draft EIS close coordination was maintained with the adjacent Los Padres National Forest and Sequoia National Park upon which these WSAs depend for many of their wilderness characteristics. This coordination was maintained during the preparation of the final EIS. Representatives of both agencies were contacted in June 1987 to identify their concerns regarding each Section 202 WSA and the consequences of wilderness designation or non-designation of these public lands. There were no instances where either agency projected any potential negative impacts on the lands under their jurisdiction as a result of the BLM's recommendations for these three Section 202 WSAs.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was consulted to determine the presence of threatened and endangered species within the individual WSAs. During informal discussions in March, 1986, it became apparent that on WSAs where endangered species are present, FWS believes that wilderness designation or non-designation would not, in itself, result in adverse impacts. However, prior to implementing any management actions that may affect threatened or endangered species, Section 7 consultation would be required. See the Appendix.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE DRAFT EIS

Comments on the Draft EIS were requested from the following agencies and interest groups as well as the many individuals who have requested to be placed on the Bakersfield District Wilderness Mailing List:

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Federal

Senator Alan Cranston
Senator S.I. Hayakawa
Representative Bill Thomas
Representative Terry Cielho
Representative Leon Panetta
Representative Richard Lehman
Representative Robert Lagomarizo

Coordination

State

Senator Alfred Alquist
Senator Kenneth Maddy
Senator Rose Ann Vuich
Senator Walter Stiern
Senator Henry Mello
Assemblyman Dominic L. Cortese
Assemblyman Sam Farr
Assemblyman Carol Hallett
Assemblyman Jim Costa
Assemblyman Don Rogers
Assemblyman Philip Wyman
Assemblyman John Vasconcellos
Assemblyman Charles Imbrecht
Assemblyman Gilbert Marquth

Local

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Kern County Board of Supervisors
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
San Benito County Board of Supervisors
San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors

AGENCIES

Federal

Department of Agriculture
- Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Regional Office, Los Padres
National Forest, Sequoia National Forest

Department of Defense
- U.S. Air Force

Department of the Interior
- Bureau of Mines
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Geological Survey
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Francisco, California
Federal Aviation Administration, Washington, D.C.
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Coordination

State

Office of the Governor
Office of Planning and Research (State Clearinghouse)
State Historic Preservation Office
Resources Agency
- Department of Water Resources
- Department of Forestry
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Department of Fish and Game
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- State Lands Commission
- Energy Resources and Conservation and Development Commission
- Division of Mines and Geology
- Division of Oil and Gas
- Air Resources, Solid Waste Management and Water Resources Control Board

Local

Fresno County Department of Resources
Inyo County Health Department
Kern County Public Works Department
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Planning Departments (Fresno, Kern, Mariposa, Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Tulare Counties)

ORGANIZATIONS

American Motorcyclist Association
American Wilderness Alliance
Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Audubon Society
CAHTO Coalition
California Association 4-WD Clubs
California Cattlemen's Association
California Mining Association
California Native Plant Society
California Off-Road Vehicle Association (C.O.R.V.A.)
California Wilderness Coalition
California Wildlife Federation
California Woolgrowers Association
Canyon City Lapidary Society
Caravan Club International
Cholame Township Sportsmen
Desert Protection Council
4-Wheel Drive Club of Fresno
Fresno County Sportsmen's Club
Friends of the Earth
Hollister Gem & Lapidary Society
Kern Valley Gem & Mineral Society

Coordination

Monterey Bay Mineral Society
National Parks and Conservation Association
Needles Gem & Mineral Club
Off-Road Advisor
Outward Bound Adventures
Sierra Club
South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society
South Council of Conservation Clubs
The Wilderness Society
United Mining Council of America
World of Rockhounds Association

COMMENT LETTERS AND RESPONSES

Sixty-four letters, postmarked on or before September 12, 1983, the end of the overall public comment period (including the 30-day extension period), were received by BLM, Bakersfield District. All comments both written and from the hearing transcripts, were utilized in developing both the Final EIS for areas over 5,000 acres and this FEIS. (See page 1-6 for an explanation of the two FEISs.)

In preparation of the Final EISs, all comments, including those from the hearing transcripts, were reviewed and considered. Comments that presented new data, questioned findings and analyses, or raised questions or issues related directly to the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action or alternatives were responded to. General comments favoring a specific alternative have been noted and considered, but required no specific response. In addition, comments addressing items outside of the scope of this EIS were not responded to.

Although the overall public review period ended on September 2, 1983, numerous comments were received through October 1, 1983, and are also addressed below. All letters that address the three WSAs analyzed in this Final EIS are printed below. Comments letters are numbered in the order they were received but are arranged by elected officials, agencies (Federal, State or local), organizations, and individuals.

All of the letters that follow were responded to in the Final EIS for the Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas distributed in February 1987. The purpose of repeating them here is to update BLM's response to those comments that address the three WSAs analyzed in this document. BLM's responses to these comments start on page 3-17. The portions of the letters meriting response are numbered and marked with a vertical line in the margin. The numbers of comments and corresponding responses consist of the letter number followed by the number of the comment within the letter. Thus 5-6 refers to the sixth comment in Letter 5. Comments responded to in this document are marked with an asterisk. For responses to the other comments, see the document referred to above.

Coordination

INDEX OF COMMENT LETTERS THAT PERTAIN TO THIS FEIS.

Elected Officials

None received.

Federal Agencies

Letter No. 11 - Sequoia National Forest

Letter No. 40 - National Park Service, Western Region

State Agencies

Letter No. 19 of the February 1987 Central California FEIS was retracted by
The Resources Agency

Local Agencies

None received.

Organizations

Letter No. 53 - Ecology Center of Southern California

Individuals

Letter No. 12 - Robert J. McLaughlin

Letter No. 24 - William DeJagin

Letter No. 38 - Theresa G. Rumjahn

Letter No. 52 - Mrs. Harry Bieber



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Sequoia
National Forest

900 W. Grand Avenue
Porterville, CA 93257

LETTER #11

FORM 1920

JUN 14, 1982



Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

We have reviewed the DEIS for the Central California Study Areas and offer the following comments:

11-1 * P. 2-12. It may be confusing to the public to show the southernmost parcel of CA-010-023 crosshatched as the remainder of CA-010-023 is. As the Sequoia has the planning lead on the southern parcel, and your acreage figure on p. 2-1 leaves it out, we suggest that it not be shown on the map.

11-2 Pp. 2-10, 2-12, 2-14. We suggest the same parcel not be shown for the reasons listed above.

11-2 P. 3-15. Suggest the last sentence under "Fire" be worded as follows: BLM portion of area under contract with CDF for fire suppression. And first sentence under "STE/Sensitive Species" be worded "...Botanical Area status on BLM and Forest Service lands, respectively."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

James A. Crates
JAMES A. CRATES
Forest Supervisor

* Comment pertaining to this document. Other comments are responded to in the Final EIS for the Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas, February 1987. See page 17 for BLM's response to comments pertaining to this document.



6/15/82

Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District, SLH
500 Truxtun Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, Ca. 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb,

I am writing to provide comments on your draft environmental impact statement Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas. In your final impact statement, I urge you to adopt alternative III--Partial wilderness. In my view, this alternative provides the best balance of competing uses for the ten wilderness study areas you have identified. I believe the additional areas in Alternative III should definitely be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. I will consider each of these areas individually.

Pancho Hills South--ORV trespass was cited as a major problem. This should be considered a staffing or police problem rather than as part of an area's intrinsic wilderness values. Vehicular recreation would continue in other parts of Pancho under Alternative III--a fair compromise.

Sheep Ridge--Small size and lack of diversity were cited as major problems. I disagree on both counts. Small size is not an important factor because Sheep Ridge is contiguous with Sequoia National Park. Although you state that these National Park lands are not designated wilderness, you neglect the fact that they are proposed wilderness (in fact, this measure is now pending before Congress), and are now managed as de facto wilderness by the Park Service. Second, you state Sheep Ridge would "... not significantly contribute diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System." I disagree. Sheep Ridge is the type of lower elevation, chaparral and canyon country which is under-represented in the Wilderness Preservation System. In short, designation as outlined in Alternative III would provide more topographically rational boundaries for Sequoia National Park wilderness.

Owens Peak--ORV trespass appears to be the major reason for the smaller area in Alternative I compared to Alternative III. Again, I believe ORV trespass should be considered only as a police problem and not as an intrinsic wilderness value. In this light, I believe the larger area recommended as suitable for wilderness in Alternative III is justified.

Finally, I wish to support your recommendation that the Pinnacles Contiguous area be incorporated into the National Monument. This would logically solve the management problems associated with this area.

Sincerely,

Robert J. McLaughlin

Robert J. McLaughlin
22 Domingo Ave. #16
Berkeley, CA. 94705

12-1

* 12-2

12-3

12-4

LETTER #24
William R. de Jager
43094 Via Miravos
Fremont, CA 94539

Bureau of Land Management
800 Junction Avenue, Room 302
Eurekafield, California 93001



Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to the DEIS for the central California WSAs. I support your proposed allocation for area CA-040-308, Minerals Contiguous. However, it seems that it would be desirable to relocate more of the National Monument boundary in subalpine. Therefore, you should consider addition of non-WSA BLM lands to the monument, as well as deletion of some land from the monument in order to put as much of the monument boundary as possible in subalpine.

24-1

Despite the difficulty in managing areas CA-040-301A and 301B as wilderness, they should still be designated as wilderness. These areas provide the only opportunity to add the California Inland Province - California Steppe ecosystem to the wilderness system. In addition, they provide opportunities for wilderness recreation at times when wilderness areas in the Sierra Nevada are covered with snow. Wilderness designation would not require the removal of existing improvements, and fencing could keep out ORVs.

24-2

The present boundary of Sequoia National Park is not very logical. Only one side of the canyon of the North Fork of the Kings River is included in the park. This does not provide very good protection

for the park's removal, as would a ridge-top boundary. Further south, the park boundary runs along township boundaries, which bear no relationship to natural features. This portion of the boundary is not very manageable and again leaves the park's removal unprotected. Therefore, it would make sense to relocate the park's boundary to ridgelines as much as possible. I therefore propose that the park's boundary be relocated as follows: from Cherry Flat, southwest along minor ridgelines to Sheep Ridge, then south along Sheep Ridge to the North Fork of the Kaweah River, then southeast over the summit of Shepherd Peak, then west to the park entrance, then south to Red Hill, then southeast along the ridge to Case Mountain, then south along ridges to the South Fork of the Kaweah River, then south along ridges to Lemmon Ridge, then east to the existing park boundary. This park expansion would include portions of areas CA-010-022 and 023, as well as non-BLM land and private land. This proposal would give both BLM and NPS land more manageable and definable boundaries, would preserve some spectacular scenery, and would give the park a better sample of low-elevation Sierra ecosystems than it now has.

I regard to area CA-010-026 I think that the entire area should be designated as wilderness, except for the portion north of Chimney Creek. This area is ecologically outstanding; preserving a large area will provide a more diverse sample of the sector and will enhance the value of the area. Denying may be required along

* 24-3

3-0

the southwest boundary to keep out ORVs.

Caliente Mountain (CA-010-042) is an outstanding area, it contains an ecosystem not presently represented in the wilderness system, and is highly scenic. I think that preservation of this area is important enough to justify buying back the oil leases that cover the area. Once this is accomplished, the area will be manageable as wilderness. While this area is hot, dry, and unattractive in summer, in winter it offers opportunities for primitive recreation while higher areas are snowed in. Its rugged topography combined with open vegetation offers opportunities for challenging cross-country travel that are not available in the Imperial's brushfields found in the roadless area in the Los Padres National Forest. Most importantly, this area contains perhaps the best example of California Grassland Prairie - Juniper - Pinyon Woodland ecosystem found in any roadless area. This area is highly deserving of wilderness designation.

In summary, I am proposing that further modification to the boundary of Pinnacles National Monument be considered, that most of Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch Case Mountain, along with other lands, be added to Sequoia National Park, and that the Panrock Hills area and Caliente Mountain be designated as wilderness.

Sincerely yours,
William D. Joyce

24-4



July 27, 1982

Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I have reviewed the DEIS for the preliminary wilderness recommendations for the Central California Study Area and find that none of the alternatives is satisfactory. The document was clearly written and followed a very readable and understandable progression. However, the unavailability analyses for the Panocho Hills North and South and Sheep Ridge Wilderness Study Areas appeared to be inadequate for the following reasons.

Panocho Hills North and South

Table 3-1 (Wilderness Planning Criteria Matrix) identifies that outstanding opportunities for solitude/primitive wilderness recreation exist in the Panocho Hills North and South due to topographic screening. Additionally, these two WSA's contain the largest number of rare, threatened and endangered and sensitive species in the ten subject WSA's. Furthermore, the California Grassland Province which exists in only these two WSA's in the district is not represented anywhere else in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This vegetation ecosystem should be represented. The Panocho Hills North and South should be recommended for wilderness designation.

38-1

All of the above-mentioned excellent wilderness values have been outweighed by the anticipated manageability problems which are based solely on ORV use in closed areas. The DEIS states that motorcycle use in the two WSA's has been prohibited since 1970. The DEIS makes a poor argument for recommending these areas as unsuitable for wilderness by using the ORV enforcement problems as a manageability problem. It appears that BLM enforcement of ORV use prohibitions has not worked well in the past. This is a management issue which needs revision to bring it up to current management standards in order to adequately control soil erosion problems and possible damage to sensitive habitats.

Sheep Ridge

The objectives to "provide a high quality wilderness experience" as well as to "optimize the manageability of the wilderness resource" were not used in the analysis of the proposed action (Alternative I) for the Sheep Ridge/Cherry Falls WSA. The Sheep Ridge WSA achieves a high quality wilderness experience by being a 6.5 mile long, rugged, steep ridge trending southeast-northwest which overlooks Sequoia National Park and a minor road (from page 3-12 of the DEIS). The Sheep Ridge WSA lies adjacent to the proposed Sequoia National Park Backcountry area. The Backcountry area is proposed for wilderness designation under the current California Wilderness Bill, presently in the Senate. The Backcountry area is presently managed by the National Park Service (NPS) in

* 38-2

the same manner as other wilderness areas. Construction of a developed campground at Cherry Falls may severely impair the NPS wilderness manageability of their area as a result of increased accessibility. Furthermore, manageability (and protection) of the wilderness resource of the 4,095-acre Sheep Ridge WSA can be optimized by a cooperative agreement with Sequoia National Park. This agreement has been proposed in the DEIS as Alternative I for the five small, irregular parcels in the Pinnacles WSA. Additionally, solitude and dispersal of recreational users is not difficult in the Sheep Ridge WSA (refer to the last sentence on page 2-12) because the use in this area must be considered in conjunction with the many wilderness opportunities provided by the adjacent Sequoia National Park area managed as wilderness. Manageability is enhanced by the lack of identified illegal ORV use, lack of logging interest, and lack of mining leases. These multiple-use activities are apparent on other WSA's discussed in the report and appear to preclude wilderness suitability.

38-3

Based upon the inventory for the Merced River WSA, I recommend that recreational development of this WSA be seriously considered to provide for protection and cultivation of the rare, threatened and endangered species and sensitive species as well as the historical and cultural values.

I fully support the Pinnacles and Owens Peak WSA wilderness suitability proposals identified in Alternative I. Unfortunately, additional wilderness cannot be proposed based upon the existing information on the remaining WSA's. However, should the wilderness values increase on the remaining WSA's, special consideration should be given immediately.

Thank you for considering my comments. Please inform me of your final recommendations.

Sincerely,

Theresa G. Rumsahn
Theresa G. Rumsahn
22 Domingo Avenue, #16
Berkeley, CA 94707



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WESTERN REGION
450 GOLDEN GATE AVENUE, BOX 36065
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102



IN REPLY REFER TO:
L7619 (WR-RNE)

July 27, 1982

Memorandum

To: District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Bakersfield
Attention: Garold W. Lamb

From: Regional Director, Western Region

ACTING

Subject: Additional comments from the National Park Service on the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations draft environmental impact statement for the Central California Study Areas

The National Park Service has additional comments on the subject document related to Sequoia National Park.

The proposed action (Alternative 1) recommends that these areas adjacent to Sequoia and Kings Canyon are unsuitable for wilderness for the reasons outlined below. We have commented on these reasons and have made a summary recommendation.

BLM Reasons

1. Neither area has sufficient size except when considered with adjoining National Park lands.

Park Comments

Wilderness suitability of these study areas should be considered in light of the status and proposals for the adjoining Park land. Most of the land in the Park adjoining the study areas is proposed wilderness, is being and will be managed as wilderness until Congress acts. Study lands and Park lands in proposed wilderness together much more than meet size criterion.

2. Study areas do not possess outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation except in connection with adjacent Park lands.

When considered together with Park lands as recommended in #1, the study areas more than meet this criterion.

3. Study areas do not contribute diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

* 40-1

The Sheep Ridge study area is the unique southern Sierra foothill oak/chaparral of California's Central Valley. The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain study area contains a good number of giant sequoias. Both of these ecosystems are unique to and would, in fact, add diversity to the wilderness preservation system.

4. Cherry Falls along the eastern boundary will need development to prevent further resource damage.

* 40-2

Cherry Falls is adjacent to the North Fork road and could be readily excluded from the study area along with the road.

5. Sheep Ridge has moderate potential for minerals (tungsten).

* 40-3

Development of this mineral material could adversely affect the air quality over and vistas from adjacent park lands.

6. Case Mountain/Milk Ranch have high potential for valuable forest products.

* 40-4

We recommend protection and enhancement of all sequoia trees.

7. The North Fork block will be difficult to manage for its wilderness value due to its small size and ease of access.

Comment number one covers the size question. Lack of easy access is a characteristic in favor of wilderness, and may be a liability in this case.

Both study areas are bordered by private lands on at least two sides. There is no separation between these private lands and the study areas. For this reason it would be difficult to control incompatible uses from encroaching into the study areas. This may be more of a deterrent to wilderness suitability than any of the reasons given in the DEIS.

We recommend that BLM further study suitability of these two study areas for wilderness designation. We suggest that the two areas are suitable and our reasoning is reflected in the numbered comments above.

Levi E. Lopez

cc: Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon

45 Hillpark Avenue
Great Neck, NY 11021
Sept. 7, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

My friends and I are very much concerned about our wilderness, and it is for this reason that my friends asked me to write this letter for them, as well as for myself. Please do not consider this as one letter, but as many and I will give you their names and addresses at the end of this letter.

We ask that you support the wilderness areas that we are listing below, for all of us writing this letter, all give our 100% support for these areas:

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA:

Owens Peak WSA

Merced River WSA (especially for the numerous canyons, mountains, etc.)

*Panoche Hills North & South WSAs

Siute Cypress WSA

Caliente Mountain WSA - especially since this area contains feeding range for the California Condor and American Peregrine Falcon

Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs: Their size, although small, should not make this area marked for non support, because of their size. They are adjacent to areas of Sequoia Natl. Park which are in the Calif.

Wilderness Bill passed by the House and their preservation as wilderness would place Sierra redwoods in our wilderness for the first time, and these redwoods must be saved.

Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA: Another area that must not suffer because of it's size. This is adjacent to the 161,394 acre Ventana Wilderness managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

*(These areas, as you know, contain high wilderness values including many rare, threatened or endangered species, such as the San Joaquin Kit Fox, blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard, Giant Kangaroo rat, and many many others that need protection.)

Once again, we ask, please give these areas your full support and do not let them be razed and used to the point where everything will be ruined and the animals will have a rough time. Thank you in the hopes that you will give these lands the support they need so badly.

Sincerely yours

William Bieber
Mrs. Harry Bieber

AND
(SEE OVER)

*52.1



ECOLOGY CENTER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
 Project of Educational Communications, Inc.
 Mailing Address: PO Box 17777 Los Angeles, CA 90013-5473

telexphone (213) 559-9160

Sept. 8, 1983



Mr. Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
 District Manager
 Bakersfield District
 Bureau of Land Management
 800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
 Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner,

Members of the Ecology Center of Southern California are pleased that you have reopened your public comment period for Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) ringing the San Joaquin Valley. We hope that after this study phase your agency will recognize the necessity of preserving as much roadless area as possible. In 1982 the original plan only recommended wilderness for 16,630. In 1983, DLM should recommend wilderness for all of the 95,049 acres in over ten WSAs.

It is unfortunate that our own Secretary of the Interior doesn't understand land use planning and makes arbitrary decisions; simply because an area is small should not preclude it from wilderness status. For example, the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA is 680 acres but since it is adjacent to the 161,394 acre Ventana Wilderness managed by the U.S. Forest Service the additional wilderness acreage would greatly benefit the wildlife. Other areas considered too small for consideration were the Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs. But again, a larger natural area could be preserved as an intact ecosystem with Wilderness Status because these areas are adjacent to areas of Sequoia National Park which are in the California Wilderness Bill which should be passing Congress. Isn't it time to include our Sierra redwoods in wilderness?

- * **53.1** Other potential wilderness areas which need more acreage are:
 - 53.2** Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous--next to Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness all of the 5,838 roadless acres are suitable (not just 2,200 acres)
 - 53.3** Owens Peak WSA--With the Pacific Crest Trail passing this area, all 22,560 (not just 14,430 acres) acres should be wilderness
 - 53.4** Merced River WSA--Certainly 12,835 acres are suitable due to the primitive recreation available in the Merced River canyon. Historical and archeological sites abound.
 - Panache Hills North and South WSAs--It's time to include the California steppe ecosystem in the National Wilderness Preservation System and of course, the rare, threatened, and endangered species living here need utmost protection (including the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat)
 - Plute Cypress WSA--would preserve the largest Plute Cypress grove in existence along with an ecosystem of juniper-pinyon woodland
 - 53.6** Caliente Mountain WSA--With so few wild California condors left, they need all the help they can get, including saving their feeding ground.

All the persons hereon mentioned asked me to write this letter for them:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| General & Mrs. B. VanderClute | Valley Stream, NY |
| Doctor Nathan Brody | Floral Park, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. Dan Novin | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. L. Asen | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. M. Bressack | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. Z. Talent | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. G. Roberts | Hendersonville, N. C. |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. L. Jones | Export, Pa. |
| Mr. & Mrs. D. Williamson | W. Hempstead, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. A. Freedman | Baldwin, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. S. Nevins | Raldwin, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. I. Levine | Woodbury, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. L. Farber | Syosset, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. Levin | Glen Head, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. S. Madigan | Glen Head, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. T. Douso | Glen Head, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. G. Linsky | Genwood Landing, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. K. Nesky | Westbury, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. R. Raggazzi | Forest Hills, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. L. Bukzin | Orlando, Fla. |
| Mr. & Mrs. C. Mallow | Scardale, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. C. Berman | Bellmore, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. R. Ettinger | Long Beach, Calif. |
| Mr. & Mrs. M. Gould | Flushing, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. M. Kass | Queens Village, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. E. Dukes | Mineola, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. O'Connell | Mineola, NY |
| Mrs. Dorothea Horarty | Great Neck, NY |
| Mrs. Buddy Melnick | Glen Head, NY |
| Mrs. Florence Klain | Port Washington, NY |
| Mrs. Anna Gregorio | F. Northport, NY |
| Miss Sue Wilson | Atlanta, Ga. |
| Miss Anne Marie McEvoy | Ashville, N. C. |
| Miss Barbara Ferris | Culver City, Calif. |
| Miss Susan Peterson | Ridgefield, Conn. |
| Mrs. Ceil Mills | Brooklyn, NY |
| Mrs. Barbara Mauerier | Glen Cove, NY |
| Mr. Peter Yanello | Flushing, NY |
| Mr. Franc Cicalese | Mienola, NY |
| Mr. Michael Rassin | |
| Mr. Arthur Sullivan | |

It should be obvious that our organization supports large portions of our public lands to be set aside as wilderness. Already the congested population of our cities are putting pressure on open space for recreational purposes. In order to have enough lands available that do not show significant signs of human use and habitation, wilderness must be established.

The scientific and educational values of wilderness should not be overlooked either. There are still many species of plants and animals that are yet to be identified. Opening this land to destructive uses such as grazing, mining, or vehicles would lose some resources that may prove to be very beneficial to humankind.

Needless to say, other species of animals as well as plants deserve a home. Wilderness gives them an area where they can live a natural life and where humans can go and enjoy seeing them in a natural environment.

Please keep us informed about your decisions. We look forward to working with you regarding the wilderness and wild lands in your district. Participation on citizen advisory committees may be another way in which we could assist your planning operation.

Sincerely,



Nancy Sue Pearlman
Director

NSP:ez

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THIS FEIS

Response to Sequoia National Forest

- (11-1) Although the South Fork of the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA was considered for wilderness designation during the Sequoia National Forest's RARE II process, it has been determined appropriate for BLM to analyze it in its own wilderness process. The correct acreage of the WSA is as stated in the DEIS, 5,742 acres.

Response to Robert J. McLaughlin

- (12-2) Recent discussions with the Park Service have indicated that they do not recommend that their adjacent lands be designated wilderness and that they have no problem with our recommendation. Since your letter was written, several wilderness areas have been established giving better representation of lower elevation chaparral in the Wilderness Preservation System. Our conclusion is that this WSA is not an outstanding wilderness candidate and its narrowness and the proximity of potential intrusions from private land would make it difficult to manage.

Response to William R. De Jagin

- (24-3) The consideration of changes in the boundary of the Sequoia National Park are beyond the scope of this EIS. Such changes would require Congressional consideration and action separate from the consideration of wilderness recommendations.

Response to Theresa G. Rumjahn

- (38-2) Please see our response to Comment 12-2, above. Construction of a campground at Cherry Falls is so unlikely it has not been included in the management actions listed on page 2A-7 through 2A-10. If a campground were constructed there it would be totally on BLM land, primitive in nature, and have virtually no impact on Park Service land.

Response to National Park Service, Western Region

- (40-1) Please see our response to Comment 12-2, above. Since your letter was written, several groves of giant sequoias have been added to the Wilderness Preservation System. These include the Redwood Meadow Grove, the Redwood Creek Grove, the Oriole Grove, and the Atwell Grove - all within the Sequoia National Park. The Agnew Grove and portions of the Deer Meadow Grove are within the Monarch Wilderness of the Sequoia National Forest.

- (40-2) The exclusion of Cherry Falls was analyzed as part of the Partial Wilderness Alternative (see pages 2A-9 and 2A-20). Also, please see our response to Comment 38-2.

(40-3) The mineral potential of the WSA is considered to be low and no significant exploration or development is anticipated (see pages 2A-8 and 2A-14).

(40-4) Management actions to protect sequoia trees are planned under both alternatives (see pages 2B-6 through 2B-8).

Response to Mrs Harry Bieber

(52-1) Please see our response to Comment 12-2, above. Basically the same reasoning applies to the Ventana Contiguous WSA.

Response to Ecology Center of Southern California

(53-1) Please see our response to Comment 40-1, above.

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BLM, 6 years

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GLOSSARY

ANIMAL UNIT MONTH (AUM): The amount of forage required to sustain the equivalent of one cow or five sheep for one month.

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC): Areas within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.

CONTIGUOUS: Lands or legal subdivisions having a common boundary; lands having only a common corner are not contiguous.

FLPMA: The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579, 90 Stat. 2743.43 USC 1701).

IMPACT: To diminish in value or excellence.

KNOWN GEOTHERMAL RESOURCE AREA (KGRA): An area in which the geology, nearby discoveries, competitive interests, or other indicia would, in the opinion of the Secretary of the Interior, engender a belief in men who are experienced in the subject matter that the prospects for extraction of geothermal steam or associated geothermal resources are good enough to warrant expenditures of money for the purpose. (From Code of Federal Regulations (Title 43, Part 1000 to 3999, p. 436), Office of Federal Register, Washington D.C., 1981).

LIVESTOCK GRAZING OPERATIONS: Those operations under permit where the primary purpose is the grazing of livestock for the production of food and fiber. Includes pack and saddle stock used in conjunction with such operations.

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN (MFP): The Bureau's basic planning decision document prior to the adoption of a new planning process in 1979, in which the decision document is a Resource Management Plan (RMP).

MINERAL ENTRY: The right to enter the Public Lands (under the administration of the BLM) to search for minerals and to claim or lease such minerals under the mining and mineral leasing laws and regulations.

MOTORIZED EQUIPMENT: Any machine activated by nonliving power source except small battery-powered, handcarried devices such as flashlights, shavers, Geiger counters, and cameras. Also "Mechanized Equipment."

MOTOR VEHICLE: Any vehicle which is self-propelled or any vehicle which is propelled by electric power obtained from batteries.

MULTIPLE RESOURCE VALUES AND USES: The present and potential use of the various resources administered through multiple use management on the public lands and any public values associated with such uses.

MULTIPLE USE: "...the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; the use of some lands for less than all of the resources; a combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources, including, but not limited to, recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural, scenic, scientific, and historical values; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output." (From Section 103, FLPMA.)

NATURALNESS: Refers to an area which "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable." (From Section 2(c), Wilderness Act.)

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV): Any motorized vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other terrain.

OUTSTANDING: 1. Standing out among others of its kind; conspicuous; prominent. 2. Superior to others of its kind; distinguished; excellent.

PLANNING AREA: The area for which resources management plans are prepared and maintained. In most instances, it is the same as the resource area, which is a geographic portion of a BLM district, under supervision of an area manager.

PLANNING CRITERIA: The factors used to guide development of the resource management plan, or revision, to ensure that it is tailored to the issues previously identified and to ensure that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria are developed to guide the collection and use of inventory data and information, the analysis of the management situation, the design and formulation of alternatives, the estimation of the effects of alternatives, the evaluation of alternatives, and the selection of the preferred alternative.

POPULATION CENTER: A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) which has a population of 100,000 or greater. An SMSA is a county which contains at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more, plus as many adjacent counties as are metropolitan in character and are socially integrated with the central city or cities.

PRE-FLPMA: Before October 21, 1976, the date of approval of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION: Refers to a wilderness recommendation at any stage prior to the time when the Secretary of the Interior reports his recommendation to the President. Until the Secretary acts, the recommendation is "preliminary" because it is subject to change during administrative review.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION: Nonmotorized and undeveloped types of outdoor recreation activities.

PUBLIC LANDS: For the purpose of the wilderness review program, any lands and interest in lands owned by the United States within the several States and administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management, without regard to how the United States acquire ownership, except:

1. Lands where the United States owns the minerals, but surface is privately owned.
2. Lands being held for the benefit of Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos.
3. Lands tentatively approved for State selection in Alaska.
4. Lands on the Outer Continental Shelf.
5. Oregon and California grant (O & C) lands that are managed for commercial timber production.

RANGELAND IMPROVEMENTS: Any structural or nonstructural improvements which directly affect or support the use of the forage resource by domestic livestock, such as fences, line cabins, water lines, and stock tanks.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP): The basic decision document of BLM's resource management planning process, used to establish allocation and coordination among uses for the various resources within a Resource Area. An RMP is a "land-use plan" prescribed by Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. RMP regulations appear in 43 CFR 1601. (Refer to definition of Management Framework Plan.)

SMSA: Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area - See definition under "Population Center."

SOLITUDE: 1. The state of being alone or remote from habitations; isolation. 2. A lonely, unfrequented, or secluded place.

SUBSTANTIALLY UNNOTICEABLE: Refers to something that either is so insignificant as to be only a very minor feature of the overall area or is not distinctly recognizable by the average visitor as being man-made or man-caused because of age, weathering, or biological change. An example of the first would be a few minor dams or abandoned mine buildings that are widely scattered over a large area, so that they are an inconspicuous part of the scene. Serious intrusions of this kind, or many of them, may preclude inclusion of the land in a wilderness study area. An example of the second would be an old juniper control project that has grown up to a natural appearance, the old fallen trees largely decomposed.

SUITABILITY: As used in the Wilderness Act and in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, refers to a recommendation by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture that certain Federal lands satisfy the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act and have been found appropriate for designation as wilderness on the basis of an analysis of the existing and potential uses of the land.

WILDERNESS: The definition contained in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 891).

WILDERNESS AREA: An area formally designated by an Act of Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS: The definition contained in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 891).

WILDERNESS INVENTORY: An evaluation of the public lands in the form of a written description and map showing those lands that meet the wilderness criteria as established under Section 603(a) of FLPMA and Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act, which will be referred to as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT: The management of human use and influence on lands which have been designated by an Act of Congress as wilderness areas.

WILDERNESS PROGRAM: Term used to describe all wilderness activities of the Bureau of Land Management including identification, management, and administrative functions.

WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS: A recommendation by the Bureau of Land Management, the Secretary of the Interior, or the President, with respect to an area's suitability or unsuitability for preservation as wilderness.

WILDERNESS REPORTING: The process of preparing the reports containing wilderness recommendations on wilderness study areas and transmitting those reports to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress.

WILDERNESS REVIEW: The term used to cover the entire wilderness inventory study and reporting phases of the wilderness program of the Bureau of Land Management.

WILDERNESS STUDY: The process that specifies how each wilderness study area must be studied through the BLM resource management planning system, analyzing all resources, values and uses within the WSA to determine whether the area will be recommended as suitable or unsuitable for wilderness designation.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA): A roadless area or island that has been inventoried and found to have wilderness characteristics as described in Section 603 of FLPMA and Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 891).

WILDLIFE IMPROVEMENTS: Any structural or nonstructural improvements which directly affect or support the use of water, food, or shelter by wildlife, such a guzzlers, water lines, or fences.

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1-1, 1-3 -6, 2A-3, 2A-7, 2A-8,
2A-13, 2A-14, 2B-5-8, 2B-11,
2B-12, 2C-3, 2C-6, 2C-10, 2C-11,
2C-13

Recreation

2A-1, 2A-7, 2A-9, 2A-13, 2A-17,
2A-18, 2A-20, 2A-21, 2B-1, 2B-6,
2B-8, 2B-11, 2B-12, 2C-1, 2C-6,
2C-7, 2C-10, 2C-11, 2C-13

RMP

2A-4, 2B-4, 2C-4, 2C-6

Sequoia

2A-3, 2A-13, 2A-14, 2A-24, 2B-3,
2B-6, 2B-11, 2B-12, 2B-15, 2B-17

Soils

2A-1, 2A-16, 2B-1, 2B-13, 2C-1,
2C-11

Solitude

2A-1, 2A-13, 2A-17, 2A-19-21,
2B-1, 2B-11, 2B-16, 2B-18, 2C-1,
2C-10, 2C-13

Special

2A-1, 2A-13, 2A-17, 2A-19-21,
2B-1, 2B-11, 2B-15, 2B-16,
2B-18, 2C-1, 2C-10, 2C-12, 2C-14

Swimming

2A-13, 2A-18

Timber

1-6, 2A-14, 2B-1-3, 2B-6, 2B-10,
2B-11, 2B-17, 2B-18

Trail

2B-6, 2B-8, 2B-12, 2B-16, 2C-16

Vegetation

2A-1, 2A-3, 2A-8-10, 2A-15,
2A-18, 2B-1, 2B-3, 2B-6, 2B-8,
2B-11, 2C-1, 2C-3, 2C-10, 2C-11,
2C-13

Visitor

2A-3, 2A-7, 2A-13, 2A-18, 2A-20,
2B-6, 2B-8, 2B-12, 2B-16, 2C-3,
2C-6, 2C-11, 2C-13, 2C-14

Visual

2A-1, 2A-14, 2A-18-20, 2B-1,
2B-12, 2C-1, 2C-11, 2C-13, 2C-14

Watershed

2A-1, 2A-16, 2B-1, 2B-13, 2C-1,
2C-7, 2C-8, 2C-11

Wildlife

1-6, 2A-1, 2A-4, 2A-8-10, 2A-15,
2A-17, 2A-18, 2B-1, 2B-4, 2B-7,
2B-8, 2B-13, 2B-15, 2B-16, 2C-1,
2C-6, 2C-7, 2C-11, 2C-12



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CAMPBELL HOUSE OFFICE

APPENDIX

Mr. J. H. [Name], [Address]
[City, State, Zip]
[Phone Number]

Dear Mr. [Name]:

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management is currently in possession of [Property Description]. [Details regarding the property and its status.]

It is our policy to [Policy Statement]. [Details regarding the Bureau's policy and the specific situation.]

We will [Action Statement]. [Details regarding the Bureau's actions and the next steps.]

Very truly yours,

[Signature]
[Name]
[Title]



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CALIFORNIA STATE OFFICE
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825

IN REPLY REFER TO:

8500
CA-930.1

MAY 6 1986

Mr. Gail Kobetich, Project Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Sacramento Endangered Species Office
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear Mr. Kobetich:

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management in California is preparing eleven final Wilderness EIS's during fiscal year 1986 that will analyze the environmental impacts of wilderness designation or non-designation on a total of 58 Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's). We hereby initiate informal consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act concerning this matter.

Some of these WSA's provide important habitat for federally listed or proposed endangered species (for example, Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles). It has been determined by the BLM that the designation or non-designation of these areas as wilderness by Congress (at the recommendation of the BLM) will have only incidental benefit to any threatened or endangered species involved, not significant positive or negative effects.

We seek your concurrence that these wilderness designations or non-designations do not themselves require formal Section 7 consultation, but that such consultation must be initiated prior to on-the-ground implementation of activities which may affect threatened or endangered species under wilderness or non-wilderness designations.

Your prompt reply will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ed Hastey
State Director



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

SACRAMENTO ENDANGERED SPECIES OFFICE
2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1823
Sacramento, California 95825-1846

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Td	HR	Initial	Date
1	SO		
2	ASDA		
	ADMIN		
3	RES		
	OPER		
	PA		
	Minerals		
	EEO		

May 9, 1986

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Ed Hastey, State Director, Bureau of Land Management, California State Office, 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, California 95825

FROM: Project Leader, Endangered Species Office, Sacramento, California 95825

SUBJECT: Consultation requirements for BLM Wilderness Designation 8500 (CA-930.1) (Case No. 1-1-86-I-321)

Action by _____
 Surname by _____
 Return to _____

In response to your May 6, 1986, request for informal consultation regarding designation or non-designation of wilderness status for Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's), we concur with your statement that this process does not require formal Section 7 consultation. Any future actions on WSA's that might affect a listed species can be evaluated at proposal stage and formal consultations initiated if needed.

If you have questions regarding this reply please contact me at FTS/460-4866.

Gail C. Kobetich

cc: Chief, Endangered Species, Portland, OR 97232 (AFA-SE)

BLM Library
D-553A, Building 50
Denver Federal Center
P. O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225-0047

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Recommendations
202 wilderness

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(Continued on reverse)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

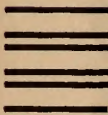
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